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HOW LESLIE LOVED



ANNE WARNER





HOW LESLIE LOVED

Books by Anne Warner

A WOMAN'S WILL

THE REJUVENATION OF AUNT MARY

SUSAN CLEGG, HER FRIEND AND HER

NEIGHBORS

SUSAN CLEGG AND A MAN IN THE

HOUSE

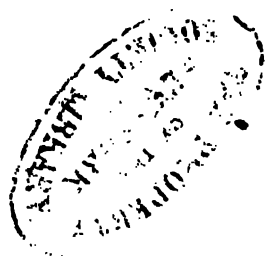
AN ORIGINAL GENTLEMAN

IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY

YOUR CHILD AND MINE

JUST BETWEEN THEMSELVES

HOW LESLIE LOVED





THE
NEW

THE NEW
THE NEW
THE NEW
THE NEW
THE NEW

THE NEW
THE NEW

BOSTON
THE NEW
THE NEW
THE NEW



HOW LESLIE LOVED

BY

ANNE WARNER French

Author of "The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary"

"Susan Clegg, Her Friend and Her Neighbors"

"Just Between Themselves" etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

A. B. WENZELL

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- She buried her face in his shoulder and cried
quite a few tears *Frontispiece*
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more closely *Page 35*
- Between silver braid and top-boots with spurs
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HOW LESLIE LOVED

CHAPTER I

LESLIE AND HER LONELINESS

LESLIE was lying alone in the dark. She had given the theatre tickets to Mrs. Snellgrove and told her to get some one — any one — and go. She was far too wretched to dream of going to the theatre herself. She had such a heartache as she had never known before. Her heart was a particularly active heart and much given to violent emotions of all descriptions, but a pain like the present one was new to it. It hurt her physically. It was a real heartache — her first real, absolute, impossible-to-ever-get-over, heartache. It was so terrible that it had made the idea of going out, and perhaps forgetting it, completely revolting. Leslie had no intention of recovering from her grief; she knew now that she loved him just by her agony, and, although they had parted forever, still she would love him and him

alone till she died. No, no! No theatre for her this evening; she had n't considered going even for a second.

She was very quiet there in the dark, staring upward. Oh, it was awful to suffer so! It passed tears; she could not shed one. To think of all the men who would have gone to any amount of trouble to make her only a little happy, and Hugo Guilford — whom she loved — had been willing to break her heart like this! He was so brutal, he was so cruel, he was so jealous, he was so unreasonable, he was so unbearable, he was so selfish, he was so all things that he should n't be; and now she was never going to see him again. And those were such good seats, too; Mrs. Snellgrove had rushed to the telephone at once and secured Mrs. Batt. They two would just revel in George Alexander and his perfections, while Leslie — who was herself very fond of George Alexander because he always reminded her of a delightful man whom she had once met on the ocean — was there alone in the dark, steeped in woe. It was awful!

She had come to bed very early, and it was now barely nine o'clock. She could hear the butler putting letters on her sitting-room table. How strange



it was to be so miserable that one did n't want to read letters. Letters might come and come, and she would never care who they were from again. Invitations which once would have filled her with joy would now be a matter of utter indifference. She never would take any more interest in shopping. She never would buy that tea-gown at Liberty's now. At least she might buy the gown, but she would never take any pleasure in wearing it. She would never take any more pleasure in wearing anything.

The idea of not taking any more pleasure in wearing her gowns did for Leslie that which we are given to understand somebody or something must do for any one whose grief is too deep for tears, — it brought them forth freely. She had to turn on the light and get up for a handkerchief, and then — as she was up — it seemed silly not to go in and look at her mail. Leslie was never silly. She had some soft, pleasantly woolly slippers on her feet; and her blue dressing-gown, lined with white silk and with its sleeves turned back by big crushed bows, lay close by on a chair. She wiped her eyes and then put on the gown; she looked so sweet in the gown that a sort of lofty pity for Hugo who would never, never see her in a dressing-gown filled her soul. The sentiment seemed to

give her quite a bit of fortitude and a certain courageous determination towards the future. She went into the sitting-room.

The butler was very stupid and had left all the lights exactly as if she might come in at any minute. The letters were ranged neatly in a row upon the center-table. The fire was burning brilliantly. It looked for all the world as if he had not at all understood that his mistress was henceforth and forever blighted. He was very stupid.

Leslie sat down in the easy-chair nearest the fire and proceeded to look over her letters. There were none from Hugo, but that was not surprising for several reasons, of which the two most weighty were: first, that he had not been out of the house two hours yet, and second, that he never wrote letters. She took up a paper-cutter and began to open the envelopes with a heavy sigh. Some were notes. A good many were invitations. One was from Mrs. Lewes, for Christmas. "A real English Christmas," Mrs. Lewes — who was an American — said artfully. There is nothing so attractive to a real American in England as to be promised something really English. Leslie, who was a real American, felt this keenly. She didn't know Mrs. Lewes very well, but she

thought her invitation sounded delightful. She was conscious of a cheerful uplift. "I suppose there will be waits and things," she murmured to herself. ("Waits and things" was her idea of "a real English Christmas.") Then she remembered Hugo and held the invitation in her hand for some time, considering what he would have said to it had he still had anything to do with her life. It was freshly borne in upon her how dreadful it was to think that he was gone. She winked very hard indeed there, but rallied presently and took up the next missive. It was also an invitation, and this invitation was even more delightful than the other, for it was to a genuine English country-house. The baronet had n't married any Pittsburgh heiress, and there was no United States veneer anywhere about the note. Leslie had met Lady Rillingham at a mutual friend's, and been properly and conventionally introduced, had seen "quite a bit" of her since, and now was being absolutely invited to stay there—at the Priory — next week.

Of course she wanted to accept dreadfully. Everything else went out of her head in the absorbing thought of actually visiting in a priory. But she was worried about the cold. She knew something of

English homes and their brightly beaming open fires, and she was nervous over freezing to death. It came to her also that Hugo might have objected to her going down there on account of Waltheof Rillingham, the son of the house; but she was most afraid of suffering from cold. Of course she was still in love with Hugo and still anxious not to enrage him any more even if they had parted forever. He enraged slowly, but when he did it, he did it with terrible effect, and he was mad enough now, goodness knew.

Leslie sighed and wiped away another tear. Then she became suddenly aware of being ravenously hungry. She had eaten no dinner owing to the intensity of her grief, so her hunger was but natural. She rang at once.

"Lapham," she said, when the butler came, "I wish you'd go to Cook and get just the nicest supper you can for me, — some of that cold pheasant, and some hot chocolate and — oh, she'll know, — and bring it here, and I'm 'Not at Home' to callers, you know."

The butler hurried away to obey. Leslie poked the fire, and it blazed up most pleasantly. She looked again at Lady Rillingham's letter.

"I do wonder whether I could stand it!" she said, and frowned a very, very little. "I suppose I'd surely freeze; one always does." She stopped suddenly, becoming aware of the frown, and quickly rubbed it smooth with her finger-tip. (For she had no intention of wasting away in wrinkles, even if Hugo did n't love her.) "And yet I'd like so much to go, if I thought that I could stand it."

There was a pause. She contemplated the fire, and poked it a little. She looked down at her blue slippers and re-tied the bow on one. When she straightened up from re-tying the bow her cheeks were pink and a lock of hair was out of place. Perhaps her color came from her labor, or perhaps from a change in the current of her thought. The current of her thought was very apt to change, and when it did, it generally set strongly in the new direction. The new direction at this instant was the recollection that one of the envelopes appeared to have been addressed by the Gräfin von Morgenlicht. She was very, very fond of the Gräfin von Morgenlicht, and it came to her that the Schloss of the Gräfin was on the Continent, that place whither Hugo had declared himself to be bound the very next day. If she were to be invited to Morgenlicht all things were possible.

The Continent is such a pleasant rendezvous, especially for those who desire to meet unexpectedly. The world is so small that an eloping couple may meet the husband anywhere, but the Continent is so small that a lady may meet a man everywhere. Leslie knew her Continent well. She knew that she could hardly float over its face without seeing again him who had vanished completely out of her life. Oh, how lovely it would be to see him again! The Gräfin had been begging for a visit for ever so long; she could cross to Calais, just have a day or two in Paris and a few hours in Monte Carlo, get to North Germany in a week or so, and it would n't be but a little out of the way (Hugo always went to Monte Carlo).

Leslie now opened the Gräfin's letter, which was in English and eight pages long. It was a dear letter and overflowing with affection and sweet German cordiality. It was just what she wanted. Both the Gräfin and her *Mann* desired Leslie to set her own date and stay as long as she could — if she could stand the rigor of life in a castle's winter. The Gräfin went on to say that in Lent they were going to Berlin and hoped that she might accompany them. At the end they let themselves greet her, and hoped soon to see her, and said other charming things, and then

came the signature, and that was all there was of it.

If the other two invitations had overlaid her grief with a quadruple plating of joy, this last filled her cup of happiness to the brim. Hugo was as much addicted to Berlin as to Monte Carlo, and even if he was n't there she knew a lot of other men who were. Her spirits were mounting rapidly now and, when the butler brought the tray and while she was consuming everything on it, she was conscious of that ability to rise above misfortune which is one of the most striking evidences of a truly great character.

"I'll try and manage to get to Brussels and get two or three more hats," she said to herself, as she poured out the last drop of chocolate, "and I'll write the Countess that I'll come the first week in February, or maybe I can get there in January; let me see!"

She finished her chocolate and pushed away the tray. The fire felt so delicious. So did the supper. After all it would be silly to submit to have one's life crushed by a man as harsh and unfeeling and altogether unworthy as Hugo Guilford. Leslie was never silly. And then, too, no one man can possibly crush the life of a woman who knows a lot of other men.

"And I know such a lot of other men," she reflected with deep satisfaction; "oh, I know such a lot of other men. It's that that makes him so mad. And I don't know what right he has to object to my knowing so many other men. He's never asked me to marry him. If he had, he'd see."

All of which was indubitably true.

CHAPTER II

LESLIE AND CAPTAIN GLENGARTY

SHE began to pack for the Priory almost at once. Rose and Mrs. Snellgrove really did all the actual work of her life, but Leslie played the title rôle even when not on the stage. Consequently when Captain Glengarty came to tea, having been invited four days previous, she felt interrupted and was therefore annoyed.

"But you asked me," protested the captain.

"Oh, dear, did I really?" said Leslie. "What could I have been thinking of, I wonder!"

"What have I interrupted?" asked the captain.

"My packing."

"But nobody ever packs in London. The servants pack."

Leslie poured the tea and gave him his as her contribution to the conversation for the moment.

"Where are you going?" the captain asked, looking to see if she had put in sugar.

"I'm going to visit friends."

"Where?"

"It's Sir Edward Rillingham's. I don't know just where. We have n't looked it up yet."

"Has he a son?"

"Yes; how did you guess?"

"How old is he?"

"I don't know. He can just remember everything that I can't."

"How extremely trying for you."

Leslie looked doubtfully at Captain Glengarty. "Are you making game of me because I'm an American?"

"My dear lady, I should n't dream of making game of you *because* you are an American."

Leslie looked at him again, — more doubtfully still, this time.

"I suppose that they'd like you to marry the son?" hazarded the captain.

"Oh, dear, no! Why they've never thought of such a thing."

"How well you must read minds!"

Leslie felt foolish, in spite of the fact that she was never silly.

"What an open countenance the man must have,"

the captain continued; "but not very interesting, I should imagine."

"Don't you want another bit of cake?" Cake is always a safe bit of repartee.

"Thank you, no. And so you're going down in the country?"

"I don't know which way it is."

"There's only one up in England, and that's London."

"Oh!"

"Is it a castle?"

"No, it's a priory."

"Fancy!" The captain smiled obtrusively.

"What makes you laugh?"

"I did n't laugh; I was merely amused over the notion of a priory's opening its gates to a woman."

"It's very old," said Leslie. "Alfred the Great built it, and Henry VIII gave it to their ancestors."

"You seem to have studied your subject."

"It's in ever so many books. It's historic. They have ivy and a chapel, and the ghost of a real priest performs mass in the chapel, sometimes."

"I don't believe that," said Glengarty.

"It's true, anyhow. Everybody does n't see him. Only a few see him. I hope I'll see him."

"How long are you to be there?"

"A week."

"And then?"

"Then I'm coming back here for a few days, and then I'm going away again — to a real English Christmas."

"Who is to have it?"

"A friend of mine, Mrs. Lewes; I don't believe you know them. They live in Regent Park."

"How did they get permission to build there?"

Leslie looked at him in great disgust.

"Who are they, anyhow?" asked Captain Glegarty.

"They're American. It's Mrs. Frederick Lewes — and her husband, of course. I met them last summer. They're very hospitable and know loads of people."

"It's easy to know loads of people if you're very hospitable. But, tell me, where is this real English Christmas to be?"

"At Kenelm."

"Where's that?"

"I don't know; we haven't looked it up yet."

"What makes you go away for Christmas — Christmas is jolly in town?"

"But I want to see a real English Christmas. I've seen Christmas in France and Christmas in Germany, and now I want to see what a real English Christmas is like. Mrs. Lewes says that they're going to have a real, genuine, old-fashioned, English Christmas."

"Have they a nice place?"

"Oh, they have n't a place at all; they're going to have it in an inn."

"In an inn!" Glengarty's face bespoke great astonishment.

"Yes."

"Christmas in an inn!" His tone was indescribable.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. Only, the idea of a party of Americans having a real, genuine, old-fashioned, English Christmas in an inn struck me for the second as being most — most American."

"They'll do it very well," said Leslie haughtily. "They're awfully rich."

"Also an American way of doing and being," said Glengarty. "Oh, doubtless you'll be very happy with them."

"I'll be warm, at any rate," said Leslie defiantly. "They're American, and so they'll be warm."

"Perhaps," said the captain.

"And there 'll be waits and things," said Leslie.
"I've always been reading about the English waits."

"Waits and things!" laughed the captain. "Waits and things! But tell me, if you survive, what do you mean to do after Christmas?"

"I'm coming back here for a few days, and then I'm going abroad."

"Where?"

"To visit my friend Gräfin von Morgenlicht."

"In Germany!"

"In Germany! *Gräfin*, you know."

"She might have a villa at Nice."

"Oh, to be sure."

"Where does she live?"

"I don't just know; we must look that up, too. But it's an awfully old castle. I think Peter the Great visited there — or Frederick the Great, I don't really remember which."

"If it's in North Germany you'll find it very cold; they hunt hares in the snow there all winter long."

"Well, I have n't to hunt hares if I don't want to."

"Naturally not; but I suppose you know about life in a German castle. One sheet, and the feather-bed on top of you."

"I've always had two sheets in Germany," said Leslie angrily.

"And do look out for the spiders; have your maid investigate everything every morning before you put it on. The castle spiders of Germany have a trick of going to rest in one's bed-slippers. That's the country where the woods are full of winged spiders, and when they get on you, you may pull off the wings, but you can't possibly pull off the spiders, you know."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Leslie.

"How long are you going to stay there?"

"I don't know, maybe a fortnight."

"And then?"

"I'm going to Berlin."

"Ah! I may be going to Berlin myself in January or February. You must let me know when you're to be there."

"Oh, I'll see you ever so many times before then. You see, I'll be in London twice."

"Yes, that's so."

Leslie looked at the clock. Glengarty saw the look and would have gone, only at that minute the door opened, and Rita Coghlan came in. She was most welcome, only —

"I hope you don't want tea," said Leslie, "because I've turned out the lamp."

"But I do want tea," said Miss Coghlan. "Do have the lamp lit again, there's a dear!"

The spirit-lamp was relit. It developed that the newcomer would have come sooner only for being caught in the claws of her hair-dresser.

"I never enjoy myself there," she said plaintively. "He holds up one lock after another and says 'dear, dear,' until I wish I'd gone to a funeral instead."

"I know," said Leslie feelingly; "hairdressers are horrid."

Captain Glengarty coughed, and that reminded both ladies that he was completely bald on top.

"Oh," said Rita, with a conscious start, "do let's go and get our fortunes told right after tea. I've just been given such a good address. They say she's a wonder."

"But I can't," said Leslie; "I'm packing."

"Packing! To go where?"

She was told where, — all three places. She paid but scant attention to the English possibilities, concentrating herself at once upon the Schloss.

"Oh, they're so clammy cold," she said. "You can't go there in the winter, my dear; you'll die!"

"It's so funny in Europe," said Leslie. "Every one worries over keeping warm. We're all always warm in America; it's a matter of course. We never talk about it."

"You're too warm in America," said Captain Glengarty. "It's beastly there, cooking hot summer and winter, too."

"Yes, that's true," said Leslie, who never stood up for anything if her company seemed to find joy in running it down. "I think it's too hot there, myself."

"It's what gives most of you such funny skins," said Miss Coghlan; "that and ice-water."

"Oh, ice-water!" said Captain Glengarty, with emphasis. And then, seeing that the other caller, instead of putting on the glove which she had taken off, was taking off the glove which she still had on, he rose to go.

Leslie bade him good-by right cheerfully. "I don't care much for him," she said, when they were alone. "Let's have some fresh tea now and a nice chat."

"Do let's go out to the fortune-teller," said Rita. "It's such sport to hear them."

Leslie, who was reaching for the bell, stopped immediately, plainly divided between her thirst and her

interest in her own fortune. "I should like to know if I'm to be married again," she said, considering.

"And it would be interesting to know who to, too," said her friend. "One always wonders that, does n't one?"

This reminded Leslie that she was n't going to marry Hugo, and at once opened up a new and wide field of scientific research. She meditated deeply. "But I don't think it's safe to visit such places alone. I'd rather go with a man," she said finally.

"The woman always says you'll marry him then, and spoils all the fun," said her friend. "And if you go to many different ones with many different men, and they all tell you that, you soon lose faith in the whole thing."

"Yes, that's true," said Leslie. "I suppose perhaps it's better to go with a woman, only it is n't so interesting," she added regretfully.

"What's best is for two women to go with one man," said Miss Coghlan. "Then you do stand some chance of getting to the bottom of things."

"But I'm going away so soon," said Leslie, coming suddenly to that phase of the situation.

"We can go when you come back. When shall you be coming back?"

"In about a week."

"That 'll do nicely. I 'll find a man to go with us. Any man will do, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, only if it 's long to wait, he ought to be more than ordinarily interesting, because one of us will have to sit with him while the other 's in with the woman."

"I 'll find a man that 's good enough to sit with."

"Not Captain Glengarty."

"Oh, no. Fancy marrying him!"

"Fancy being told that you were going to marry him; that would be worse," Leslie shivered a little.

"But some one will marry him some day. That 's always so strange to me. Some one always marries every one, sometime."

"Yes, that 's so," said Rita, and then she put on her gloves and pulled down her veil, asked the loan of an invisible hairpin, and departed.

CHAPTER III

LESLIE AND A PRIORY

LESLIE and her maid set out for the Priory with the best intentions in the world. But, unfortunately, traveling in England is not so easy as one might imagine. Many English landowners objected to having railroads pass here and there over their property. So the railroads went around — and do still.

They had to change at Chillworth, at Grimwell, at Pulham Cheap and at Little Settleback. This was hard, and the maid became quite worn out and so nervous that her eyes could not stop counting the hand-luggage.

“Have we any more sixpences, Rose?”

“No, madame.”

“How many sixpences have we used this afternoon, do you suppose?”

“I don’t know, madame. I changed a ten-shilling piece before we left.”

“Oh, dear!”

There was a silence. The fast-darkening scene, in spite of the December chill, had a wonderfully soft cosiness of outline. Little thatched cottages nestled by big hayricks, and smooth brown hedges ran about with a wavering confidence in their own ends. It was very pretty. The train stopped again.

"Pegg's Gate," called the guard.

"Do we change here, Rose?"

"I don't know; I will ask." She lowered the window as she spoke and leaned out.

The guard came along, and a question was put and replied to. Leslie divined the answer.

"We must change?"

"Yes, madame, and quickly."

"My goodness me!"

Well, they changed again.

"I should n't think that England was big enough to hold all the railroads we've been over to-day," said Leslie, who, although not overgiven to conversation with her maid, was sometimes moved thereto by sympathy.

"No, madame." Rose was settling their bags where the porter had piled them hurriedly.

"Is n't this carriage cold?"

"It's freezing, madame."

"We 'll have to unroll the rugs again."

"It 's only ten minutes to Lapwell Ham, the guard says."

"Oh, dear, then I suppose we must just freeze."

"Shall I unroll them, madame?"

"No, don't."

It was very dark outside by this time. One could see nothing except an occasional signal or a lighted window.

"What time did we leave London?"

"At half-past one, madame."

"And it must be five now."

The maid looked at her wrist-watch. "It 's ten minutes after five, madame," she said.

"Oh, dear!"

"Lapwell Ham!" cried a guard outside, with explosive suddenness.

"Rose, this is it."

"Yes, madame."

Great confusion ensued. A porter got the luggage out, and it was all claimed immediately by a footman. Then came a little promenade across the bridge above the tracks, a closed carriage, and a long, long drive.

"I never thought of it 's being so far," Leslie said; "it will be a rush for dinner."

"Yes, madame," said Rose, her mind already busy dealing with the contingencies to come.

The carriage mounted a hill and went along a sort of avenue on top. Leslie remembered having received a postal-card view of the hill and the avenue. After a while the carriage ascended more hill, wound about a bit, and stopped before a great stretch of Doric portico.

Confusion followed; but this confusion was of a mild, well-bred sort. By the time that Leslie was altogether established in her own room she had learned that Lady Rillingham was in Bath and should have arrived a half-hour before. Dinner would not be served until eight o'clock under existing circumstances. Leslie was very content.

"And is n't it deliciously warm?" she said, seating herself in a low chair by the pretty fire. "I never was more comfortable in my life."

"It's very nice, madame," said the maid, who was unpacking on the other side of the room. "I think I saw hot-water pipes about as I came up."

"Oh, Rose!" Leslie's tone was one of ecstasy. Within her heart she was conscious of having mentally committed a great injustice against the English aristocracy.

When the luggage was fairly to rights Rose went away for a half-hour, and Leslie laid herself deliciously back in the deep chair, crossed her feet on the fender, and was happy as only a chill American can be in a warm English country-house. The room was charmingly pretty, with white enameled furniture and violets on the curtains, the walls, and the dressing-table.

Then there came a tap at the door and a voice crying, "It is I; can I come in?"

It was Lady Rillingham, a stout, lively dame in a tweed suit and with a rolled journal under her arm. They exchanged mutual greetings. The hostess opened fire first.

"Was n't it dreadful about my train? — so late. But the trains are all late at this time. It's the children getting home for their holiday — little dears! Four hundred trains of them from Brighton yesterday — or four hundred children, I'm sure I don't remember which. Little dears! I read it in 'The Times.'"

Leslie was being somewhat embraced during all this, and now expressed her pleasure over being where she was.

"Had you a nice trip? Was your train on time?"

"We had a very good trip, only for changes."

"Yes, one does do a good bit of changing, does n't one? My father-in-law would n't hear to railways on any of his land, you see. It's very trying. We have to send to stations in all directions. Some one is driving now to Witherhithe Wove to fetch Waltheof and Captain Melton. They'll be very late. I've put dinner off till after eight for them. It would n't matter for Waltheof, but Captain Melton is a stranger, and he may be extremely nice, may n't he?" Lady Rillingham's tone was most appealing.

"I hope so," said Leslie. "Are there a great many in the house?"

"Not so very many. We could take care of a lot more by doubling up a bit, you know. Thirty, or maybe forty, I believe. But, my dear, are you warm enough?"

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"I'm so glad. I've ordered your fire made up fresh at eleven every night, and extra coals will be put where your maid can get them if you burn all these. You must n't be cold with us, you know."

Leslie felt almost too happy.

"You see, I know American ways," said her ladyship kindly. "We know a lot of Americans, as I told

you before. And they must be warm or they 're not comfortable, are they, now?"

"I 'm afraid not," Leslie confessed.

"Waltheof will be so glad to see you again, — poor boy," Lady Rillingham went on smiling. "It 's such a long, cold drive that I wanted to send a closed carriage, but the brougham is just in with me, and the landau is at Topton Junction waiting for the Keggies; poor dears, they will be very late; they 'll be held back by the school-children from the north."

"Dear me, but you have got a lot on your hands!"

"Yes, have n't I? But it would n't be so hard if my father-in-law had let the lines come on his land. But I must run away now and leave you to rest. Here 's a magazine to amuse you. There 's a very interesting acrostic in the back. Are you any good at acrostics?" She opened the roll under her arm as she spoke and turned directly to a certain page.

Leslie took the book. "I 've never had much experience with acrostics," she said hesitatingly.

"Have n't you? Why, we work with them all the time." Lady Rillingham's surprise was evident. "My sister's governess often gets them out correctly." She took the magazine again and looked at it eagerly. "I 'll just show you a bit, and then you can go on

alone by yourself. You see these lines refer to the word; it's a little poem — " She interrupted herself to get her glasses and place them upon one of those noses which the Romans left behind when they abandoned Britain. "There, my dear, this is it: 'As flies the time, So flies my task; And with the rhyme, I questions ask.' There, what do you make of that?"

Leslie looked at her quickly, believing that she must be joking; but meeting her kindly, serious gaze, she hesitated, struck dumb by this totally unexpected phase of English country-house visiting.

"Can you make anything of it?" Lady Rillingham asked. "You see you must have some basis to work on, or you can't possibly get on at all, can you, now? Nobody has been able to do anything with this one as yet. My husband thought it was a crow; but it's a double acrostic, you see."

"What is a double acrostic?" Leslie asked.

"Why, my dear, don't you know anything about acrostics?"

"No, nothing."

"A double acrostic is when both ends spell something."

"When both ends — spell —"

"Yes, dear, that's it. Here, for instance, this

line: 'Below the sun, above the sea.' Miss Kitt (my sister's governess is Miss Kitt) thinks it's Vesuvius, only we can't work the V in. But the S would do in Cheapside. Only it would be a letter short, would n't it?"

Lady Rillingham was looking attentively through her glasses at the acrostic and did not see Leslie's parted lips and air of complete bewilderment. The latter could hardly persuade herself that she was not the victim of some curious phase of humor.

"Oh, by the way," the hostess said, suddenly ceasing to examine the acrostic, "you have your divorce, have n't you?"

"My divorce! I'm a widow."

"Not really? Not a real widow?"

"Yes, indeed."

Lady Rillingham removed her glasses and stared.

"You don't mean your husband is actually dead?"

"Yes — yes, really."

"Really! Why, I never heard of such a thing! An American husband actually dead! Sir Edward will be pleased when I tell him. He does n't like divorced women. But, my dear, are you sure? Do excuse my surprise, but — but I'm so startled. I only asked about your divorce on account of my

sister. My sister is so fond of Americans; she knows ever so many, — she let her place to one once, — but she had a very bitter experience last year, and so I asked on her account. Oh, my sister did have an experience!”

“What happened?”

“Why, as you’re a widow I don’t mind telling you in confidence. But don’t speak of it to her. She’d never forgive me. You see she took no end of trouble for an American woman, had the man down repeatedly, you know, and all that; and when he offered himself the woman was n’t divorced. So trying for my sister, was n’t it? And the man was most vexed. It placed him in such a trying position, did n’t it, now?”

“I’m really a widow,” said Leslie, feeling a little frightened. “But I do hope you’re not having any one down for me?” she added, attempting a smile.

“No, dear, no one.” Lady Rillingham rose. “But I must say I’m pleased over you’re being a widow. An American widow is such a novelty. And Sir Edward will be pleased; he so disapproves of divorces. You know they’re most unpleasant with us. It’s different with you.”

“Yes,” said Leslie; she felt quite crushed.

"Now I must run along. I'll be in the drawing-room at eight, and do come down early. Maybe we can work a bit on the acrostic before any of the others get ready."

She looked at Leslie so earnestly that no one could have done anything other than promise to hurry. Leslie promised, feeling like Alice under the spell of the Red Queen.

Then she was left alone. Rose, entering later with a shining can of boiling water, found her asleep on the lounge. The acrostic was in the chair by the fire.

CHAPTER IV

LESLIE AND THE ACROSTIC

It was all of eight o'clock when Leslie, pleasantly conscious of youth, health, and a handsomer gown than any one else would likely be wearing, descended the staircase and was ushered through two cold drawing-rooms into one most gloriously, brightly warm. Late as was the hour it was nevertheless easy to see that she was full early, for Lady Rillingham was sitting at the further end, with a glass screen between herself and the fire, and the only other person present was another lady, of large and severe appearance, in a blue velvet dress. Lady Rillingham had on a green satin gown with appliquéd velvet roses placed where the dressmaker had thought wisest; she had the acrostic in her hand, and her glasses were in their place.

Leslie wended her way in and out amidst the chaos which generations of generous bestow upon the unhappy but continually hereditary drawing-

rooms, until at last she touched the fingers of her hostess.

"And this is my sister, Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster," Lady Rillingham said, with a wave of the hand from one to the other; "and we are so glad to have you come and help us, are n't we, Edith? You see, this is just the same as the one you had up in your room; we have two copies. And oh, my dear, it is an awful one!"

She made a place for Leslie on the sofa as she spoke, and directly that young woman was seated, sat close beside her with the magazine in her hand, and an expression of the greatest possible solemnity on her face. Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster, who had been sitting on the other side of the fire, rose at once and pushed her chair over close to them. Both sisters seemed to recognize the advantage of focalizing personal magnetism when anything great is to be accomplished.

Lady Rillingham opened the magazine and offered Leslie one side to hold. Leslie took hold of her side.

"There, that is it," said their hostess, pointing, "right under that big splash of ink; the splash of ink has nothing to do with it, however. The splash of ink is an advertisement. I do hope you did n't





let the splash of ink confuse the meaning for you?" She looked at Leslie with so much concern over the possibility of such an evil chance, that Leslie hastened to disclaim all mental distress resulting from the splash of ink. Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster, who had been thoughtfully considering the stranger's gown up to now, suddenly leaned over and studied the acrostic upside down.

"I think it refers to the outgoing government, it's so pointed. 'As flies the time, So flies my task.' I don't see how it can mean anything else. And my husband feels exactly as I do about it."

"But, my dear Edith," said her sister, in a tone of earnest entreaty, "'outgoing' has eight letters and 'government' has ten; and it's a double acrostic."

"But, my dear Maude, what does it mean, then?"

At that Lady Rillingham examined the acrostic more closely yet through her glasses. "Perhaps one of the men will be good at a guess!" she said finally.

Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster turned and looked at the fire for a full minute. "Is your room warm?" she asked Leslie then, very abruptly.

Leslie almost jumped. "Yes," she said, and sneezed before she could stop herself.

"I thought so," said Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster. "You see, Maude, she's taken cold already."

"But I have n't," Leslie cried in great distress. "I'm deliciously warm, and my room is as cozy as can be;" and then, to her great dismay, she sneezed eight times without stopping.

Lady Rillingham hastily laid the acrostic aside and seized some smelling-salts and applied them. Leslie, who had her handkerchief to her face, did not see the salts until she smelled them. Then she went into a veritable paroxysm of sneezing and rising, hastily started to leave the room, but was stopped in the doorway by Waltheof Rillingham, who was just coming in.

"Ill?" he asked, with concern.

"No, j-j-just sneezing," said Leslie, and managed to get around him and escape. She fairly flew upstairs and down the long west corridor. Her door was next to the last, and as she approached it she ran into a man just emerged from the last room of all. It's an odd sensation to run into a strange man in a long hall just before dinner. If he's the right height his shirt-bosom creaks so curiously.

"Oh, my goodness me!" she exclaimed, extricating herself quickly, and then she fell back against a door,

so startled that she did n't know whether it was hers or not, and forgot all her sneezes.

"I beg your pardon," said the man in a freezingly polite tone, and turned back at once, that in the privacy of his own room he might ascertain what sort of a front she had left him to put up. Ladies in dark halls sometimes betray more than they intend just by laying a train of powder and not lighting it. Leslie, left alone, forgot all about why she had come up, and went back downstairs in a bewildered and stunned state of mind.

"Are you better?" Lady Rillingham asked, as she entered. "Oh, my dear, you're feverish!" She looked distractedly at Waltheof, who was standing by the fire.

"It's a chill," exclaimed Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster. "I told you no American could stand our climate, Maude. She's going to be ill."

"Give her a brandy and soda," suggested Waltheof.

"But I'm all right," Leslie protested.

"Take a brandy and soda," urged Waltheof. "I will, if you will."

Just here the door opened and Mr. and Mrs. Keppie entered. Greetings all around — and of the most cordial kind, for Mr. Keppie was going to be some-

body some day, and his wife had begun to dress the part already.

"What a time we have had, to be sure," said Mrs. Keppie, adjusting a little bird which she wore hung in her hair upside down. "Dear Lady Rillingham we thought it was just Topton, and we got down at Topton Pips." Mrs. Keppie's voice was most plaintive.

"You see, my father-in-law would n't consent to allowing the line to run over his land," said Lady Rillingham; "it makes it so very difficult for our friends. But, Mrs. Keppie, have you seen the latest acrostic?" She opened the magazine as she spoke.

Mrs. Keppie seized the other half of the journal as if it were a straw and she had been drowned for a week. As for Mr. Keppie, his face asumed the usual expression of a man who is used to courting popularity at any cost. That much of the party seemed happily disposed of.

Waltheof approached Leslie. "Melton and I have just been driving over from Witherhithe Wove," he said, pronouncing it without the slightest difficulty; "ever been there?"

Leslie, who always said "bin," wished she could

remember to pronounce it properly, and wondered if she ever should. "No, never," she said sadly.

"From Witherhithe Wove!" cried Mr. Keppie, abandoning the acrostic and joining forces with those who did n't want to be joined. "That is a drive, is n't it?"

"I believe you," said Waltheof. "Melton's sorry he came."

"Who is Melton?" asked Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster, without turning.

"Captain Melton? Oh, he's a fellow in town. You won't like him, aunt."

"Why not?"

"He's sarcastic."

Just then the door opened and Sir Edward came in. He was a stout, jolly man. "Hello, Waltheof," he said cordially; "I did n't know you'd got here."

Then he spoke to all the rest. Then others entered, and finally the door opened, and the man who had the next room to Leslie's came in. He was a nice man and she liked him at once. Of course he was Captain Melton. Leslie liked captains. There was hardly anything that a man could be that Leslie did n't like. She had the most liberal views.

Dinner came next. After dinner Lady Rillingham

took her guest to one side and spoke seriously with her. "My dear, I'm so sorry, but I never met Captain Melton before, and he seems most peculiar."

"Yes," said Leslie, tentatively.

"He does n't like women and he dislikes Americans. I'm sure I wish that Waltheof had never asked him."

Leslie looked across at Mrs. Keppie and her hostess' sister. For a minute she hardly knew what to say.

"Captain Melton and I need not see much of one another," she suggested finally. She felt that this would be a pity even as she said it. Captain Melton would never know what he had missed, and that seemed so sad.

"No, dear, of course not. And he'll be out of the house most of the day, and I'll see that he never sits near you."

Leslie felt a revulsion of sentiment. "Oh, I've nothing against him," she said quickly.

"No, of course; but why should you be annoyed with him? When it's not necessary. That's what I say."

Leslie felt horribly lonely at this, then she smiled. "But perhaps I could bring him to like women and — and Americans," she suggested; "shall — shall I try?"

Lady Rillingham patted her hand. "It's like your sweet nature to propose it," she said; "but I can't allow you to martyr yourself. No, no, I'll see that he never troubles you. And now —" she looked around vaguely, "we'll just get together and work on the acrostic "

"Acrostic!" said Mrs. Keppie from across the room. "Oh, yes, do get the acrostic!"

"I'll read it to you all together," said Lady Rillingham. "It may make it appear in a new light." So she read it to them all together.

"Why, that means Herald Square," said a certain large, raw-boned personage, who always traveled with a hammer and a nut-cracker, and prided herself on her unexpected resourcefulness.

"Herald Square!" said Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster, not understanding.

"Yes, where all the newspapers are printed for America. Nothing could be simpler."

Leslie sighed. And then she sneezed. And then the men came into the room. It was no use denying that Melton was the best-looking man among them. Leslie, who liked handsome men, felt dreadfully over it all. It was hard; it hurt her as much as anything could hurt her now that —

CHAPTER V

LESLIE AND THE AFTER-DINNER HOUR

WHEN the men walked into the room Melton looked directly at Leslie; this was hopeful. But his look was indifferent and his brow slightly drawn; that was horrid. Leslie felt a mad longing to make him absolutely adore — Americans — come over her. She often had such seizures and found them difficult to recover from.

Melton came and stood near her and looked at a picture. She wondered if she ought to say anything. He continued to stand there, and finally she decided that she must say something, so she said:

"It was very stupid in me to run into you."

"Oh, that was nothing," said Melton, "people are continually doing stupid things. One should n't be captious."

Leslie had n't expected that. Whenever she had declared herself stupid, men had always said very

nice things, indeed most awfully nice things. She was much startled.

"I hope that I did n't hurt you badly?" she said after a while.

"Nothing to speak of," said the captain, still regarding the picture; "I'm too old a soldier to mind a blow on the chest, even if it was a bit stiff."

Leslie quite gasped. "Were you — were you in the Crimea?" she asked hurriedly. She had the feeling that she, at least, must attempt to be agreeable.

"No, I was n't, but my grandfather was. I was in the Partition of Poland."

"Oh," said Leslie. She had a vague feeling of misery because of not knowing when Poland was parted. "How nice," she murmured after a long twenty seconds, and then she felt that they had best cease discussing history. She looked upon history as her one, and only, vulnerable spot.

"You're not in the army now?" she asked.

"No, I'm here now," said the man.

She looked at him in real vexation then, for he spoke with a sort of courtly insolence that she had never encountered before.

"What makes you so abominably rude?" she asked. "Is it because I'm an American?"

Melton let his monocle fall. "I did n't know that I was abominably rude," he said; "pray overlook it. I'm rather a boor, I know; but although I dislike Americans I never intend to be abominably rude to any one."

"But why do you dislike us so?"

He turned from the picture at last. "I often wonder," he said; "it's a curious antipathy of mine. Or perhaps it's because you've each been an American child once."

"And you don't like American children?"

"Horrid little brutes," said the captain, and turned back to the picture.

"If I say another word he'll take an antipathy to me, most likely," Leslie thought, so she rose and walked away to the other side of the room and there seated herself on a low divan. Sir Edward came at once and sat beside her. He did n't want Waltheof to marry a widow, so he warded off the possibility by sitting down beside her himself.

"It's very cold," said Sir Edward.

"I'm delightfully warm," said Leslie.

"I meant outdoors," said Sir Edward. "Do you see that picture?" he indicated one opposite.

"It's a portrait, is n't it?" she asked.

"My great-uncle," said Sir Edward.

She looked at the painting in astonishment, for it represented a young girl of sixteen weaving a daisy chain. "It's — it's very beautiful," she hazarded.

"Yes," said Sir Edward, "he was a great painter."

Leslie hoped that Captain Melton had heard that, as he had seemed to her to have a sense of humor. That led her to ask:

"Is Captain Melton Irish?"

"He does n't look so, does he?" Sir Edward replied; then he dropped his voice. "Most peculiar chap," he said; "I can't understand Waltheof's taste."

They were getting out the bridge tables, and now the morose captain sat gayly down and won all the money the company had on them and some they had n't.

"My friend is n't making himself popular," said Waltheof, coming over to a seat by Leslie, who did not play because the cards never made any impression on her.

"I think it's awful to play for money," she said.

"I fancy the rest all agree with you."

Then Waltheof turned so that his back screened them both from his mother and talked of other things.

"Don't, please," Leslie implored.

"What?"

"Don't lean over me that way!"

"Why not? No one can see."

"Your breath on my ear — oh! t-there, I knew it would end so." She began to sneeze violently again.

She sneezed and sneezed, until she not only had to go to her room but broke up the bridge. They all came over by the fire.

"You ought not to have asked her," Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster said, with a sister's freedom; "my husband feels just as I do about it."

"Americans are no good in December in England," said Captain Melton, who, since his winnings, had become markedly better-tempered.

"She's very charming," said Mrs. Keppie, who was so embittered by her losses that she did n't know what she was saying but meant to disagree with the captain anyhow.

"If she has influenza, it'll run through the whole house; you know that, don't you, Maude?" said Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster. "Think of my girls!"

"Let's think about ourselves a little bit first," said Captain Melton. "Why don't you quarantine her?"

"But that will quarantine you too; you're right next to her, you know," said Lady Rillingham seriously. "I can't think she's really ill. Let's get the acrostic."

"I hate acrostics," said Captain Melton.

Mrs. Keppie went at once and sat by her husband. "Did he drink much?" she whispered in a tone so near to inaudible that every one was only just able to hear what she said.

Waltheof began to laugh. His mother rose and looked feverishly about for the acrostic.

"What are you going to do to-morrow?" Mr. Maskelyne-Myster asked of his brother-in-law.

"We thought of motoring to Dorchester. Mrs. Revere's never been there. I suppose the rest of you will hunt."

A hunting ripple passed over the party.

"Who will go to Dorchester?" Mrs. Keppie asked.

"I'm going to take the chauffeur," said Sir Edward seriously — he was naturally a very serious man — "and my wife, and Mrs. Revere, of course,

and any one else who wants to go. There will be room for two more — for one more, comfortably.”

There was no immediate rush for either the comfortable or the uncomfortable vacant space.

“The roads struck me as very slippery,” said Melton; “but perhaps you’ve managed to accustom your Dorsetshire tires to that.”

“You can’t accustom a tire to anything,” said Mr. Keppie.

“Can’t you, indeed,” said Melton; “mine are used to anything.”

Mr. Keppie looked closely at his face. His wife looked anxiously from one to the other.

“There, I have it at last,” exclaimed Lady Rillingham, rejoining them with the magazine; “now we’ll have a delightful half-hour.”

Every one drew around the fire except such as were already standing before it.

“What do you say to a game of billiards before we break up?” Waltheof proposed to his friend.

“But can Lady Rillingham spare me?” Melton asked, smiling pleasantly at his hostess.

“Yes, yes,” said her Ladyship hurriedly; “there’s a beautiful fire in the billiard-room.”

They went out directly.

"Oh, Maude, what a terrible man," cried Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster, almost before the door was fairly shut; "three pounds, ten, my dear, — three pounds, ten!"

"I never like playing for money," said Lady Rillingham, who had two pounds, five, gnawing at her own conscience. "Waltheof knows him; I wish Waltheof did n't."

"I think he's rather amusing," said Sir Edward. "That was rather good what he said about the tires; I did n't think so at the moment, but I've been thinking it over since, and it was really rather good."

"I did n't think so," said Mrs. Keppie; "I don't find anything he says in the least amusing. I think he's a boor."

"And if she has influenza and my girls get it!" said Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster, with a long, solemn, expressive pause.

"Perhaps it's hay fever?" suggested Mr. Keppie.

"Or face powder?" suggested his wife.

"You do have the most impossible people down here, Maude," said Lady Rillingham's sister severely. "Why don't you confine yourself to your own set, as others do?"

Lady Rillingham had had her sister too long to care in the slightest degree what she said or thought about anything.

"Let us work on the acrostic," she pleaded. "Would n't it really be quickest to get it out by separate words? Take this, for instance: 'From tower and turret, bell to bell doth peal; And slippers laid aside bare stones can feel.' That would be mosque, would n't it?"

"Or Madeira, perhaps," said Mr. Keppie. "They used to travel from one to the other, you know."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Lady Rillingham, fairly delighted over having evoked one little spark of interest. "That must be it, of course. Do draw near, Albert," she said to her brother; "you're so good at all this."

"I'm not good at it at all," he said; "I never tried to do one in my life."

"Well, at least you can fetch the dictionary and help us. Come now."

Meanwhile, in the billiard-room the guest had just finished a run of fifty-two.

"Oh, I say," cried Waltheof, "this will never do, you know. To-morrow you'll kill all the foxes, and the day after you'll shoot all the pheasants, and

then you'll go up to town again and not leave a friend behind you."

"I'm not going to hunt to-morrow," said Melton. "I'm going to Dorchester. And I shan't be urged to play bridge again, and that suits me very well; for I never stay a winner long."

Then Waltheof gasped in his turn.

CHAPTER VI

LESLIE AND THE MOTOR

THERE were no thrills of joy when it was learned that Waltheof's friend was going to join the motor-party. Sir Edward took the precaution of hurriedly sending forth word that no matter what happened nobody but the driver was to touch the motor.

"I 'm afraid he 's one of those men who will simply absorb all the rugs," said Lady Rillingham, who, in the privacy of her own room, was busily engaged in making a neat mat out of her hair with invisible hair-pins. "Who invited him to go, anyway?"

The maid was laying out a choice array of lined coats, and Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster in her riding-habit was looking out of the window.

"The man is a cad," said the latter feelingly, —
"a cad, my dear. Three pounds, ten!"

"You ought to go, Edith," said her Ladyship;
"you 'll have a very bad hour overtaking them now."

"Albert is n't ready."

"Albert went on with Dr. Bigsmouth a long time ago."

At this Mrs. Maskelyne-Myster gave a jump and left the room at once.

"Give me my woolen hug-me-tight, Grey," said Lady Rillingham, with a stout sigh. The maid did as she was bid and then, by further labor, succeeded in getting everything else laid on the bed off the bed and on to her mistress.

The hunters were long gone when the motoring party gathered under the Doric portico. They looked like a polar expedition — but many motoring parties look like polar expeditions.

"You shall sit in front, Melton," said Sir Edward. "I'll sit with my wife, and Mrs. Revere will sit between us. Is the foot-warmer in, Benson, and the extra rugs?"

"Everything is in, sir," said one of the half-dozen servants who were swarming quietly about, poking umbrellas and guide-books and other necessities here and there.

"I think we may start now," said Lady Rillingham, pulling three veils down and two collars up, "and we want to go by Winny Abbey and come back over Bushrow Hill, my dear."

"Oh, my dear Maude," expostulated her husband, "we can't come back over the hill."

"Yes, we can; I want to show Mrs. Revere the view."

"It 'll be too dark to see the view, Maude."

"Then we must leave Dorchester a bit earlier, Edward."

"But we must get to Dorchester before we can leave Dorchester, Maude."

"Edward!"

"Maude!"

"Do you mind my lighting a cigarette while you 're talking it over?" said the captain. Leslie looked at him in real horror. And yet she could n't help liking him, because he was so good-looking.

No cigarette was lit, because the suggestion closed the discussion at once. They set off, and they took the road by Winny Abbey.

The way was very pretty, but there was a piercing wind. Leslie, tucked between her host and hostess, was deliciously comfortable; not so they. It soon showed in their comportment.

"That 's Winny Abbey, there to the right, Mrs. Revere," said Sir Edward; "it 's the oldest Cistercian foundation in England."

"Benedictine, Edward," said his wife.

"Cistercian, Maude," said her husband.

"Benedictine."

"Cistercian."

The motor rolled swiftly nearer.

"Why, it is n't Winny Abbey at all," said Sir Edward; "it's Little Claptrap Church. I thought we were on the other road."

"I did n't see how you could see Winny Abbey from this road," said his wife; "but of course I never contradict you."

"Of course not," said her husband.

"My dear, such a curious thing," Lady Rillingham said to Leslie, "that ditch to the right — not the one to the left; nobody knows anything about the ditch to the left — but that ditch to the right is said to be one of the oldest Saxon ditches in England."

"One of the earliest British ditches," corrected Sir Edward.

"Saxon, Edward."

"British, Maude."

"Edward!"

"Maude!"

"There is n't any ditch along here," cried Captain Melton.

"Oh, I was thinking of the Tippy Lipton Road," said Lady Rillingham. "I wanted to go the Tippy Lipton Road."

"Why did n't you say so, then?" said Sir Edward.

"Say so, Edward!"

"Say so, Maude!"

Leslie began to feel very uncomfortable, but just then the motor broke down with a whizz and changed the bent of the conversation.

"I wanted to drive," said Lady Rillingham, who experienced much the same difficulty in getting out in her wraps that the Biblical camel is cautioned against in regard to the needle's eye. "I never like to motor."

"You can't drive to Dorchester," said her husband.

"Edward!"

"Maude!"

"Come, my dear, let us walk on a bit," said Lady Rillingham, who never was ruffled in the least degree by her marital bouts. "They can overtake us."

"Or else we can't, you know," said Melton, who was now lighting the cigarette; "you can count on our doing one of the two, however."

They walked on. It was a lovely country road, with no end of picturesque twists and turns.

"And do you know, my dear," said Lady Rillingham, as soon as they were out of the motor's hearing, "I just took out the page with the acrostic on it and I've got it in my muff. We can have a nice time working on it as we walk along."

Leslie gasped; but just then the motor came flying up.

"It was n't anything at all," Sir Edward said, getting down; "only took half a minute's work."

The captain got down, too, hoisted her Ladyship into the car, and threw Leslie in on top of her. He was a strong man, and it was a truly beautiful fling that he gave her. It loosened all her hairpins, but she did n't mind.

"Do you know, he's uncommonly knowing in motors," Sir Edward told them, raising his eyebrows and nodding hard at the front seat to let both ladies know whom he meant.

"I've been used to them all my life," the man on the front seat said, without turning.

Lady Rillingham poked her husband behind Leslie, opened her eyes widely, and otherwise signified that Captain Melton had certainly heard what had ~~been~~ said about him.

They reached Dorchester about half-past one.

"Just in time for lunch," said Sir Edward; "we 'll eat, and then we 'll go and see Maumbury Rings."

"That 's the Roman Amphitheatre, is n't it?" asked the captain.

"Yes, have you seen it?"

"No, but I 've heard about it."

"He seems to be well-read," Sir Edward said, in a very low tone, to his wife.

"Oh, I like old ruins," said their weird guest.

All three looked at him in different kinds of dismay.

After luncheon they walked out to the Roman Amphitheatre, which, owing to the fact that the ground belongs to the Prince of Wales, who rents it for a sheep-pasture, has never been uncovered except in spots, and has then always been hastily covered up again.

"It is n't as interesting as it might be, is it?" said Lady Rillingham. "Some think it most uninteresting."

"Is there anything else to see in Dorchester?" the captain asked.

"There 's the museum. It contains a Roman pavement," suggested Sir Edward cautiously.

"That can't be anything new."

"Perhaps we 'd better start back," said Sir Ed-

ward. "We want to climb Bushrow Hill by daylight, if possible."

"But we have n't seen half Dorchester yet," protested Lady Rillingham; "there is a great deal yet to be seen."

"Oh, no, there is n't, Maude," said her husband.

"Edward!"

They went back to the motor. All the wraps were safe, and they were soon in and off.

"The days are so short," said Leslie.

"Yes, are n't they?" said her hostess. "Edward, did you buy the new number?"

"The new number of what, Maude?"

"Of the acrostic."

Silence betrayed the true fact of the case.

"There, that 's St. Ebba's Well!" said Lady Rillingham, rallying her forces after the blow.

"St. Tibbet's Well," corrected her husband.

"St. Ebba's, Edward."

"St. Tibbet's, Maude."

"Is that the hill?" the captain called from the front seat.

"That? Oh, no, we're ten miles from Bushrow Hill," Sir Edward answered.

"Twelve," said his wife.

"Ten," said her husband

They sped on and on until, just as night fell completely, they whirled a corner and flew at Bushrow Hill.

Half-way up they stuck.

"We must all get out," said Sir Edward. "Get out, Maude."

"Dear, dear!" said Lady Rillingham.

Melton reached into the motor, lifted Leslie out as if she had been a baby and set her gently down in the mud. She was beginning to like him very much indeed.

"Now hunt for stones," he bade her.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because!" he answered, and passed around in front of the motor.

"Was that a joke or did he really mean it?" Lady Rillingham, who seemed to have taken dumb root by the back wheel, asked Leslie.

"I don't know," Leslie replied. "I never saw such a man."

"Maude, are you hunting for stones?" Sir Edward inquired in the dark.

"Then it was n't a joke," said Lady Rillingham, with an air of relief. "My husband never jokes. His

father never did. We must find some stones; they 'll be right beside the road if they 're anywhere."

The motor stood still with its four huge eyes glaring ahead, and the driver and the captain diving actively in front of it. Behind, in the pitchy Stygian darkness, Sir Edward, his wife and Leslie sought fruitlessly for stones.

"I knew that we could *never* make this hill," said Sir Edward, when he had pounced on his fifteenth stone and found it to be a dead leaf, after all.

"Then why did n't you say so?" said his wife.

"I did."

"Edward!" with two exclamation points.

"Maude!" with three.

"I think there 's nothing to do but to back down, sir," said the chauffeur.

"Well, if we must, we must."

It took about fifteen minutes to commit the deed, for the motor acted like an elephant whose mind is wandering. The party spent their time alternately rushing down in the ditch or up in the hedge to keep out of the way.

They reached the Priory about seven. Sir Edward was most uncommunicative during the last hour. His wife asked him several questions and he answered none

of them, so she finally announced her conviction that he must be asleep.

"If he's asleep, you and I can talk freely," she said then, "and, my dear, I'm very glad, because I want to tell you who is coming to-night."

"Who?" said Leslie, bracing herself to support her slumbering host as well as she could.

"Such a nice man. You'll like him immensely. And between ourselves, dear, I asked him just on your account."

"Oh," said Leslie, her tone non-committal.

"He's English, but he's been in America and will understand just what you mean all the time. You'll like him. And I expect you could marry him if you chose."

Leslie did n't just know what to say to that.

"He is n't so very well off, but he's not poor by any means, and he has n't any sisters; he's really quite desirable."

Leslie felt very miserable, owing to the other man's close proximity and acute hearing. She had only made the merest beginning with him, and she really was n't quite ready to make another fresh start.

"I'll manage so you see a good bit of one another,"

said Lady Rillingham, "and if you like him I'll manage so you 're together constantly."

Just here they whirled up on their own ridgy avenue.

"So pleasant to be at home again," Leslie said faintly. She felt that that was a perfectly safe statement to make in any case.

CHAPTER VII

LESLIE AND ANOTHER MAN

DRESSING for dinner that night Leslie was not happy. She thought perhaps it was the long ride to Dorchester, but she felt also that perhaps she cared for Hugo too much. If she cared for him at all any more, it would be that much too much, for Captain Melton had begun to strike her as a delightful possibility. He had begun to look at her in the right way. There is a right way in which a man can look at a woman and there is a wrong way, and Captain Melton knew the right way. Then, too, he was so disagreeable, and Leslie was the sort of woman who cannot tell brutality from sincerity, nor cleverness from rudeness. She felt really drawn towards the captain, and under those circumstances it would be silly to break her heart over Hugo. Leslie was never silly. She could n't break her heart. She could forget Hugo, and she made up her mind to do so at once.

It came over her how hideous it would be for a

woman to really have her heart broken. She felt that the woman would have a right to be very angry, and she frowned as she thought how angry. Then she wondered if she did love this new man. Suddenly she remembered what Lady Rillingham had said about still another new man and felt her abyss deepening. It is awful to have new men come too fast. It is like an English dinner where they always carry off the plates before one is finished. Leslie felt life to be sadly complicated. She sighed, put on her necklace, and went down to dinner. On the stairs she decided once and for all time that she did not love Hugo and would cease to think about him. It is very dangerous when a woman decides that she no longer loves the man with whom she is in love, and that she will henceforth cease to think about him. It's bad for any other man who may be around and happen to like her. It's his great chance, and if luck is against him he sometimes gets the woman, — or if luck is for him.

The new man that arrived that evening was a very nice man indeed. He was n't as big as Hugo, but he was better-looking than Captain Melton and a better fellow. He had many advantages over the latter, whatever might be his general status as to the former. He was an older man and a wiser man, glad to hear

that Leslie was a widow (for he did n't approve of divorce any more than Sir Edward did), but ready to like her whatever she was, directly he caught the first glimpse of her. The instant that he saw her he thought, with a pleasant thrill, that if he liked her he might marry her. Many men and women meet one another on some such basis.

There were a good many strange people to dinner, some with their hair done very remarkably indeed. There was the girl who had been designed for Waltheof, only Waltheof declined his own part in the pattern. Leslie felt sorry for the girl, who had apparently been designed for nothing else.

Dinner lasted a long while, and the new man sat far away, and she did not know which he was for ever so long. Captain Melton sat on her left and was very good indeed.

But his savor seemed to have departed, somehow, Coming events were perhaps already casting their shadows before. Finally,

"What do you think of Woman's Suffrage?" the captain said, and that ended his standing in Leslie's eyes. The weather is a bright new topic to launch in England compared to Woman's Suffrage just now. Leslie decided she would n't marry so stupid a con-

versationalist under any circumstances. It would be better to be unrequited by Hugo. She felt a sudden sympathy with the world's judgment of Captain Melton.

"I do wonder what sort of a woman you 'll marry," she said, savagely stabbing her bird in the breast.

"But I've married," said Melton. "You don't mean to say you don't know that? I married ten years ago."

Leslie nearly fell into the sauce they were just then offering her. "No, I did n't know it," she said.

"How droll. But you're married, too?"

"But I'm a widow."

"Well, I'm a widower."

Then she *was* angry.

Melton seemed vastly amused over this little *contretemps*.

"Have you any children?" she asked presently.

"No; have you?"

"No."

Their mutual loneliness did not seem to bring them any closer together. Leslie was very glad when she could leave his side. Even the acrostic seemed preferable to a man so full of surprises. She wondered that she could ever have liked him for a minute.



Mrs. Keppie hooked on to her in the corridor and asked her if her pearls were real. Leslie resented this, since they were not.

"I have some real pearls," she said; "but they 're in a safe in New York."

"I thought all Americans had real pearls," said Mrs. Keppie, who did n't believe in the safe in New York, and thought Leslie lacking in brains not to have lied when she could have done it so easily.

When the men came into the drawing-room the new man came and sat down by Leslie. Mrs. Keppie thereupon moved away.

"I wish you would tell me something at once," said the new man. "Are you in love? I know that you 're married."

Leslie was so startled that she could hardly breathe.

"I don't want to trouble to begin the game if you 're in love," said the new man. "It's a game I'm good at, but if you 're in love and concealing it, I've gotten past the age that thinks all 's fair — even in war."

She looked at him. "What's your name?" she said, "and how old are you?"

"My name's Ralph Witney," he answered, "and I'm forty-one."

"I think I 'm still in love," said Leslie slowly, "but I 'm not sure. Anyway, I 've decided not to ever see him again."

"Then you 're not engaged?" said Witney.

"Oh, no," said Leslie readily, "he never asked me. It was just — just — just —"

"I see," said the man; "never mind explaining. I understand perfectly."

The rest were all playing bridge, all except Melton and Waltheof, who got left out in some curiously entangled manner. Leslie, on the sofa by the fire, was amused and interested. She liked this man very much. He agreed to drive her to see the meet next day. She felt a lovely sense of getting the better of Hugo. It was really exhilarating to be so free from thrall.

About eleven o'clock Waltheof came into the room and dragged a seat up near the sofa. "Well, that 's over," he said, rubbing his hands; "my, but the night is bitter!"

"Where have you been?" Leslie asked.

"I drove with Melton to the station."

"Who was he, anyway?" asked Witney.

"He was n't such a bad sort," Waltheof said carelessly, looking into the fire; "only he lacked tact." Then he rose and joined the bridge group.

"Well, I can see that Waltheof is n't the man," said Witney. "You have n't much ability at concealing your feelings, have you?"

"Oh, I have n't any at all," said Leslie; "but of course Mr. Rillingham is n't the man. I don't believe I care any more about the man, anyway. Only, when I think of caring for any one else — I — I'm afraid. I don't know what I'm afraid of. But I'm afraid."

"Try to explain," said Witney, encouragingly.

"But there's nothing to explain. It's no use, anyhow."

"Where is he?"

Leslie looked for a minute as if she was seriously considering whether to tell or not. "I don't know where he is," she said finally.

"Have you known him long?"

"About a year."

"You know a lot about him, of course."

"Yes, I know ever so many people who know him."

"And you really think you care about him?"

Leslie considered. "Well, I did think so," she said finally.

"What are his attractions? Is he handsome?"

"Y — yes. I think he's handsome."

"What do you like best about him?"

She considered. "He can make me mind; and then, too, he's so big; I feel so safe with him."

"Has he saved you from danger often?"

"N — no."

"You'd better give it all over," said Witney, with the faintest possible note of authority in his voice. "I'm quite sure that he isn't at all the man for you."

Leslie was nothing in the world but a very feminine woman. "Don't you think so?" she said faintly, depressed by this summary dismissal of her case.

"I know it," said Witney, who was a more than ordinarily masculine man and always sponged his slate before beginning a fresh sum.

Leslie hesitated about entirely giving up her love on such short notice.

"I imagine he bothers you a lot. Does he like to bother you?"

"Y — yes; he likes to be unaccountable."

"You don't want to marry a man that likes to be unaccountable," said Witney.

"Well, he's never asked me to marry him," said Leslie. "I told you that before."

"You can't marry a man who never asks you, you

know," said Witney. "I'd give it all over, and think no more about him."

It sounded very feasible. She looked at the floor and then she looked at Witney. It seemed the only sensible course to follow.

They talked of other things and had a truly lovely time. They made all sorts of plans for the next three days.

But the next morning one of the under housemaids came down with the scarlet fever, and the whole party exploded in thin air.

Mr. and Mrs. Keppie and Leslie went up to London on the same train. Witney went too. There were five days before the date set for the visit to Mrs. Lewes in Kenelm, and Leslie saw a great deal of Witney. She saw nothing at all of Guilford, because he really had gone to Paris, or somewhere else. At any rate, he was n't in London.

CHAPTER VIII

LESLIE AND HER DOUBTS

By the end of the five days in London Leslie was more than ever uncertain as to whom she was in love with. She felt quite giddy. It is difficult to be impartial when one of the men is in Paris, even if one is not silly, and Leslie — let it never be forgotten — was not silly.

She went to take tea with Witney at the Carlton, and she looked so bewitchingly pretty that the casual observer would have surmised her next surname without overstudy.

"He does n't write often, does he?" said Witney, who was clever enough to always keep her deadly weary of the subject of Hugo.

"N — no," she said; "he's never been great at letter-writing."

"Perhaps he is n't reduced to such poor means of keeping his memory alive in his friends' minds?"

Leslie did n't know what to say.

"Women are very odd," said Witney thoughtfully. "You don't really care anything about that man; you just fancy that you do."

"Do you really think that?" she said earnestly.

"Think it! I know it!"

She looked at him. "He's always been very nice to me," she said dubiously.

"Has he ever made desperate love to you?"

"I don't know what you call desperate love. He's made me love him desperately. Is n't that enough?"

"He's a gentleman whose self-control I'm very far from admiring, then," said Witney, with emphasis.

"You'd better give him up."

Leslie looked more than ever dubious.

"You don't really know what love is," said Witney.

She looked at him again, this time less kindly. No woman likes to be told that she does n't know what love is. A prettier way of putting it is to add "up to now."

There was a pause. He wondered if she were going to say "What is it?" but she did n't. After all, perhaps, she was wise; the Carlton with all its charms is a very public place. There are only those two little tables behind the palms and they are open on three sides.

"I'm going down to Kenelm day after to-morrow," she said finally.

Perhaps as a reply to his assertion it did as well as anything.

"Where is that?" the Englishman asked, after an instant's consideration.

"You change at Snipham."

"I don't, for I've never been there."

"Well, I change at Snipham, then."

"Whose place is it?"

"It is n't anybody's place; they want to get out of London for Christmas week, and so they're taking a party down there."

"Down where?"

"To an inn. The Guardian Inn." She knew all about it now.

"Is it near the Downs?"

"What Downs?"

"The Sussex Downs."

"I don't know. I don't know anything about it. I only know that I'm asked and that I can't take my maid."

"Why not?"

"There's no room for her."

"Ah, the Guardian's scope is limited?"

"It seems so."

"I'm afraid you'll find it very cold," said Witney.

"What, in an inn?"

"Oh, dear, yes."

Leslie looked sober; she had quite forgotten about the cold.

"But they are Americans," she said; "they'll be sure to be warm."

"They may find it a task beyond their powers," said Witney. "I have known Americans who could n't possibly keep warm in Europe. I've heard them mentioning the fact among themselves."

Leslie laughed and took a bit of cake.

"If I'm too cold I can return," she said.

"What, if you're a guest? Oh, yes, you can have a telegram sent you, of course."

Somehow she felt suddenly singularly lukewarm as to her Kenelm invitation. "But it's too late to get out of it now," she thought, a bit dismally.

"Shan't I take you down?" Witney suggested. "It is n't much of a run."

Her enthusiasm rose like a geyser. "Oh, that would be sport," she exclaimed joyfully. "But what would you do after you got there?" she paused to add, somewhat appalled.

"Oh, I don't know. Stay at the Guardian, perhaps?"

"But if there is n't room for Rose?"

"There would be room for me."

Leslie did n't stop to consider the difficulties; she thought that it would be lovely. She had n't known Witney much over a week yet, but she already hated to be parted from him. Leslie was a woman of strong — friendships.

"I'll get my things thrown together to-night," the man went on, "and I'll meet you at what time to-morrow?"

"I go from Victoria at half-past one."

"What an abominable hour to start."

"But I could n't get there for lunch and I can for tea."

"I see."

So it was settled, and it was an hour or so after she had been left at home before she began to feel that maybe she was thickening her plot a bit too much. Also she felt uneasy over Hugo. She could n't seem to altogether recover from Hugo. It is very difficult to be a woman. She recognized this upon finding a note from Rita Coghlan stating that the fortune-teller was set for next day. Her face fell most unaffectedly at

this piece of news; there is nothing quite so distressing as to go to a fortune-teller when you do not know what you want her to say. Under those circumstances she is prone to pronounce your character vacillating and, after much wandering of her mind, describe quite the wrong man.

Leslie retired, feeling very blue. She felt that perhaps she had underrated her constancy. "I dare say I really am broken-hearted after all," she reflected; it was quite her favorite reflection when slightly depressed. Then she thought of Captain Melton. Then she wondered if it would be cold at Morgenlicht. Then she wondered if Mrs. Lewes really did for one second suppose that she would marry her brother. She wondered who else would be down there. She wondered if the others would be queer. The Lewes were given to queer people, owing to reasons narrowly connected with their nationality. She wondered where Hugo was. She wondered what Witney was doing. Then she turned over on her other side and went to sleep.

Rita came to lunch next day. "I don't believe I'll have mine told," she said, adjusting her hat before the mirror; "it's a guinea, and I need a guinea for something else just now."

"Why did you pick out a guinea one?" said Leslie.
"The five-shilling ones do just as well."

"I did n't pick her out; the address was given me. I did n't know how much it was until I wrote for the appointment, and she put her card in with her answer."

"Oh, dear!" said Leslie briefly.

"I found a man to go with us, too," said Rita.

This brightened up the atmosphere directly.

"Who is he?" Leslie asked.

"He's quite nice. And he's that age that he won't object to anything crazy for fear we'll think him old."

Leslie desired to know the name of this agreeably constituted being at once.

"Delauney Dane," said Rita. "He's nobody new; we've known him for ages; he's got a lot of money."

"But he's not to pay the fortune-teller for me, you know," Leslie stipulated.

"You need not be afraid, my dear; he's such a believer in Women's Rights that if you want to pay the cab fare he'll not feel sensitive over it."

"I think we'd better take an omnibus," said Leslie; "where is it, anyhow?"

"It's a good bit beyond Hammersmith. You know where Hammersmith is, don't you?"

"I know where Chelsea is and where the British Museum is."

"It is n't in that direction. We can take an omnibus very nicely, though. Just out here by the park."

"I always like to ride on top of an omnibus," said Leslie. "You feel superior to even the policeman there."

Mr. Delauney Dane called for them soon after lunch. He was a very tall, thin man, with a glass and a stick. Leslie thought that he was an Englishman for quite a while.

It was easy to see that Mr. Dane was accompanying them for no reason on earth except to prove his youth. He regarded them both with a regard which, when he was n't controlling it carefully, showed plainly that he thought them very silly. When he learned that they were going on an omnibus, he clearly disapproved, and said that he "had n't been on an omnibus for — some time."

"If the fortune-teller tells me that I'm going to marry him, I shall be mad," said Leslie, while they were getting their wraps. "I think that I had better have picked out a man to go with us. I know nice men."

"But he's so amusing," said Rita, not at all bad-tempered over this slur at her circle of acquaintances, "and if he could enter into the spirit of the thing it would n't really be as funny as to see him swallowing such acute disapproval all the time. He's only going just so as to be with us, you know."

"But that's all that men ever do anything for," said Leslie, starting back to the sitting-room.

They all three went down and out into the street.

"I really think we'd better take a taxi," said Mr. Dane.

"No, indeed," said Rita; "you shan't go throwing your money away like that."

"Well, if you really don't want to," said the gentleman; "but at least let us go inside the omnibus."

"I can't," said Leslie; "my hat breaks against the top."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Rita; "we'll go on top, and you go inside."

But even Mr. Dane would n't hear to that.

"Well, then," said Rita, who possessed a readily constructive imagination, "we'll go on top, and you come, too, and pretend you don't know us. And then we'll pretend to get acquainted."

Mr. Dane was plainly much shocked at this idea.

"Well, then, we 'll just go as we are," said Rita.

The Hammersmith bus came lumbering up Piccadilly just then, and they hopped and clung and climbed to place, to Mr. Dane's great and evident disgust.

Leslie sat with a forlorn man studying botany, Rita sat behind with a stout lady, and Mr. Dane sat across the way. Rita leaned towards him directly they were seated and said, "Oh, Alexander, did you remember to leave the money for the chimney-sweep?"

This was too much for Leslie, who continued to be affected by fits and starts until some time after they had entered Bayswater Road.

The stout lady and the botanical gentleman getting down there, they all got together again and discussed fortune-telling with great earnestness.

"You must n't mind if she tells you you're to marry one of us," said Rita to Mr. Dane; "they so often do that."

"I never believe in anything of the sort," said their escort, with emphasis.

"No, I would n't," said Rita, "because, after all,

marriage is just a side issue, is n't it? And what we really are taking all this trouble for is to find out about the big things in life."

"For instance?" said Mr. Dane interrogatively.

"Why, whether I shall make a success of painting or not," said Miss Coghlan; "things of that sort."

"I did n't know that you painted," said Leslie.

"I have n't begun yet," said her friend; "but if a fortune-teller told me that I would, I would at once."

Mr. Dane looked very serious indeed at this, and opened and shut his gloved hand as if feeling of his own future privately.

It was a tremendously long way out there, and Leslie never had dreamed that London was so big. They had to get down and walk to the right at last, and when they reached the house the fortune-teller was out.

"But I had an appointment," said Rita.

The maid looked at the card which she produced and pointed out that it said Thursday, whereas to-day was Tuesday.

Thereupon they went home. Leslie, who had expected to have her difficulties all settled for her through the payment of one guinea, was almost as much disgusted as Mr. Dane himself.

"The idea of dragging us 'way out there for nothing," she said; "you are too careless for words."

"Never mind, you know another man now," said Rita, who was not easily crushed, "and that 's always worth some effort."

"Effort!" said Leslie. She was really vexed.

CHAPTER IX

LESLIE GOES DOWN TO KENELM

THE next day dawned about ten o'clock and was very nasty under foot, especially in the Victoria Station. Leslie and Witney found their train, and the porter found them even in spite of a dense yellow fog. The train pulled out on time, and before they got to Clapham they were getting on very well indeed.

"I shan't trouble you much," said Witney, "I'm going to hunt. But I'll be there if you want me."

Like all Englishmen, he had a way of referring to Americans as if on special occasions they were liable to leap and rend even their guests.

"I — I don't quite think you'd better stay at the Guardian," said Leslie, beginning to perceive the difficulties of her position as they drew more into the focus of the present. "Can't you stay somewhere else?"

"Yes," said Witney. "I can stay at the Man

and the Hen. I'm told that it's as good as the Guardian."

Leslie liked the idea of his staying at the Man and the Hen very much indeed. "You see," she said hesitatingly, "I'm awfully afraid of Mrs. Lewes, my hostess. She's — she's — she's rather peculiar."

"Yes?" said Witney interrogatively.

"Yes; she would think — well, she would think you came down on my account. She would surely think that."

"Would that be so unbelievable?"

Leslie blushed. "To tell you the truth, I should hate to have her think that," she confessed; "she's very strict indeed."

"Is she a friend of Guilford's?"

"N—no. She does n't even know him."

"Has she a son?"

"No."

"A brother, I mean?"

Leslie looked up in surprise. "Why, yes; how did you guess?" She could n't at all see how all men hit on that same line of questioning.

"I thought from your description that she might have a brother. Is he down at the Guardian too?"

"Yes, he lives with her — with them, I mean."

They had to get out at Snipham and change and wait twenty minutes besides. They looked into the waiting-room and then decided to walk up and down.

"What sort of a Christmas party is it?" Witney asked.

"About six or eight, I think. Not so very big."

"I suppose that you know them all very well indeed?"

Leslie considered. "No, I don't think that I do," she said, after a while.

They drew near to Kenelm about four o'clock, English schedules being still much disarranged by the floods of school-children.

Leslie grew very nervous. "I don't know what to do about you," she said; "some one will surely meet me, and what shall I say?"

"Say I'm a friend."

"Yes, but Mrs. Lewes will wonder why you came down with me. She'll — she'll think it looks queer."

"Shall I go over in the other corner and be a stranger?" suggested Witney.

Without going into any consideration of future complications Leslie gratefully accepted this suggestion. Witney separated their hand-luggage and got out a newspaper to be absorbed in when the

train should stop. But he forgot to return her keys which he was carrying, as she had no pocket.

When the train did stop, Frederick Lewes, the dog, and a man in attendance were waiting. The door opened and Leslie alighted. Witney was folding his newspaper with the placid air of a most complete stranger.

"Allow me to hand you your bag, madame," he said politely.

Leslie wanted to laugh, but Mr. Lewes was shaking hands with her, and she was afraid that he would think that she was laughing at him. Mr. Lewes, who was a large, pompous gentleman with bushy side-whiskers and a very red face, had a great aversion to being laughed at. He was terribly afraid that he was funny, and he could n't bear it. The man in attendance did n't move; he had never been a man in attendance before, and all that he had learned so far was that he must always ride on the box. The dog stood mournfully by. He was a huge dog, and had been hugely car-sick coming from Brighton the day before.

"Dabbs, just take these things to the cab — I mean the carriage," said Mr. Lewes. He was n't any more used to being a man attended than Dabbs was

to attending, but he was more interested in learning the rules. Witney delivered Leslie's things into the hands of Dabbs and then went off with her keys still in his pocket.

"He will see to your luggage," Mr. Lewes began; but just then some one accidentally hit the dog, who turned tigerish instantly.

"Oh, dear," said Leslie, "if he was really mad what could you do?"

"I could n't do a thing," said Lewes proudly; "nobody could. Come, Earl of Arran."

Earl of Arran was the dog, who, after his one little spurt of temper, had collapsed so thoroughly that his knees shook under him.

They went out to the carriage. Dabbs was already on the box and looked down upon them with interest.

"If you don't mind I'll put the dog in first," said Lewes. "He likes to look out of the window, and he's too big to turn around, so we always put him in first."

Leslie stood back while the Earl of Arran got in first.

"Don't step on his feet when you get in," Lewes cautioned; "he always snaps if any one steps on his feet, and we can't really blame him, you know."

"Perhaps you'd better get in next," said Leslie.

"Well, perhaps I had. Dabbs, get down and shut the door."

Dabbs got down. Lewes got in; Leslie got in. Dabbs shut the door, and then Dabbs got up and they rolled away.

"Oh, my trunks!" Leslie exclaimed suddenly. "Who saw to them?"

Lewes, who was supporting the dog's head on his bosom, started slightly.

"Can't we send down from the hotel, perhaps?" Leslie suggested.

"We can send Dabbs just as soon as we get there," said Lewes; "he can see to them. That's part of his regular duties, you know."

Leslie felt far from sure, but did not care to discuss the question.

When they arrived at the Guardian Dabbs got down at once, and went straight into the house and shut the door after him.

"He ought not to do that," said Lewes, really vexed. "Just sit still for a little and see if he does n't come back?"

They sat still for many minutes, but Dabbs did not return. After a while the inn porter came and took them out, with one eye fixed anxiously on the Earl

of Arran all the time. Lewes and the dog led the way in. Leslie and the porter followed them upstairs.

"Arabella will want to see you at once," said Arabella's husband. "I'll show you her sitting-room, and you can go in while I find Dabbs. I must speak to him severely. He should n't get out and go off in that way. I can't overlook it; not possibly."

The sitting-room door was half open, and Leslie went in. Mrs. Lewes, a personage fully as imposing as her husband, was seated by the tea-tray, a gentleman with mirthful eyes stood before the fire, and a lady wept at the window.

"You're very late," said Mrs. Lewes, looking up severely. "How do you do? Why did n't you take your hat off before you came in? You know I never like to see any one in a hat. Maurice, press the bell for tea. Cecilia, stop sobbing; you've cried long enough."

Maurice pressed the bell, but Cecilia continued to sob. Leslie went around the table and received a solemn hand-shake of welcome.

"Draw up a chair and sit down," said Mrs. Lewes. "Maurice, press the bell again. Where can tea be!"

Maurice pressed the bell again.

"Shall I go and take off my hat?" Leslie asked.

"No, not now. We've all seen the way you look with it on, so you'd only make tea later than you've made it already. Where are the rest? Maurice, press that bell."

"Shall I go and look for them?" asked the man with the mirthful eyes. "I'm great on getting a party together when it's tea-time."

"No, you won't come back. Cecilia, if you can't stop crying, I must ask you to leave us."

Cecilia did n't wait to be asked a second time; she fled that instant.

"Who is she?" Leslie asked.

"Why, my dear, she's just a friend — nothing in the world but a friend, and she expects to be treated like a princess. I've just had a good talk with her and — Maurice, I wish you'd leave the room. Press the bell again first."

Maurice pressed the bell again first and left the room.

"Sit down, my dear," said Mrs. Lewes then, with a deep sigh. "I don't want to burden you with my troubles, but really I'm quite used up. Do you know this house was built over five hundred years ago, and we did n't know a thing about it until last night.

It's very cold and turning colder. I'm afraid the dog will have pneumonia. Don't you see a change in him?"

Leslie shook her head. "But he was looking out of the window all the way up," she said. "I could n't see his face."

"Looking out of the window! Was he really? I must remember to tell that at dinner to-night. I don't know what we should do without that dog; he's the center wherever he is. All the strangers in the dining-room watch him every minute they're eating. He does such cute things. Yesterday a gentleman was folding his paper, and the dog took his chop while he was n't looking. He's so bright. But, my dear, do tell me something else directly; how did Dabbs do?"

"Oh, he did nicely," said Leslie.

"Did he really? I'm so glad. You see he'd never been a valet before, and it's all new to him. But where is our tea? Do you mind pressing the bell for me?"

Leslie did n't mind, and so she pressed the bell for her.

"The poorest service I ever saw in all my life," observed Mrs. Lewes. "You see, they think because

we brought our own maid and valet that they need n't do a thing for us."

Some one came this time — a meek, elderly man who looked like a duke who had seen better days.

"Roberts," said Mrs. Lewes severely, "mend the fire and call my maid and bring up tea instantly; do you hear?"

The fallen duke trembled like an aspen and began on the fire-mending as the easiest road to prompt humility.

"Leave that," commanded Mrs. Lewes; "get the tea first, and get Kimberly."

"Yes, madame; very good, madame." The duke disappeared.

"I shall never do this again," said Mrs. Lewes, taking up the sugar-bowl and setting it down very hard. "I shall have to turn Kimberly off as soon as we get back to town. She's most remiss. She thinks because we're in a hotel she need not see to anything. I'm sitting between two stools the whole time. Press the bell again."

Leslie pressed the bell again.

"Did you ever see such poor service? I think I'll go mad. Where is Maurice, do you suppose? Where

can he be gone to?" She seemed to have quite forgotten dismissing him.

"Who is he?" Leslie asked.

"He's a man alone over here — an American. We did n't think of asking him at first, but we tried to get a graphophone and we could n't, so then we asked him. He'll do just as well. He's very bright. But, I declare, where is that tea; the dog will be absolutely famished!"

"Shall I ring the bell again?" Leslie asked.

"No, my dear, go and get Kimberly for me; she's right in the next room. I shall be so obliged."

Leslie went out and to the next door. It was open, and she paused, for she had never seen anything like the sight before her.

It was a long, narrow room, without any fireplace. There were two trunks, one with a coffee-service spread out on it, and the other heaped with clothing, boxes of biscuit, bottles of wine, stockings rolled and mended, shawls, pillows, clothing, etc., etc.

On a mattress on the floor sat a maid, a little scarf around her shoulders, and the dog's head in her lap. The rest of the dog was asleep, and it covered the rest of the room. The maid raised her hand in peremptory warning, and Leslie did n't dare speak.

She went quickly out and returned to the sitting-room, where she recounted the details of her expedition. Mrs. Lewes listened attentively.

"I expect the dog is quite worn out. He hates to go to the station and meet people unless it's some one he knows really intimately. I begged Frederick not to take him, but Frederick would n't listen to reason. It's perfectly absurd to coerce the dog into going to the station when he really does n't want to or need to. But he must have his tea. Press the bell, my dear."

Leslie pressed the bell with great vigor, and while she was still pressing it the fallen duke came running.

"See where every one is," commanded Mrs. Lewes.

"Yes, madame, whom shall I see?"

"Who? Why, Mr. Lewes and Mr. Phillips, — my party, of course."

"Yes, madame."

"And bring tea immediately!"

"Yes, madame." The duke withdrew.

"I expect you had better go and take off your hat," said Mrs. Lewes. "It's not becoming, and besides it makes me very nervous. You'd better wash, too, while you're in your room; you're sure to need it after that trip, you know."

"I'll wash at once," said Leslie. She was as glad to get out of the room as every one else, even if she had no notion of where she should find her own.

She went upstairs and wandered about an icy corridor for a little, but finally, finding the Boots and a housemaid in an angle together, learned from them that she had n't any room as yet.

"Do you want one with a fire?" asked the Boots, "because there ain't any in most of the rooms."

Leslie, who had only known Mrs. Lewes as a very hospitable and amusing acquaintance in London, began to wish that she had never met her.

"Would you like some hot water?" said the maid.

"Yes, I should," said Leslie.

The maid and the Boots departed before she had time to reflect that she had n't been given a room, after all. Most of the bedroom doors were open, and after walking up and down viewing icy interiors for five minutes she recognized her bag and case of sticks reposing on a vast and snowy couch. She went in and inspected them and took off her hat. After a while, as the maid did n't return and there seemed to be no bell in the room, she felt forced to go back downstairs.

"Well, I am glad to see some one," said Mrs. Lewes.

"I never saw such a party! Frederick and the dog are asleep, John has gone out to walk, Maurice can't be found, and Miss Lovejoy has cried herself ill, and is n't coming downstairs again to-day. Sit down."

Leslie sat down. "Who is Miss Lovejoy?" she asked, for the second time. "You just started to tell me."

"I don't wonder you ask," said Mrs. Lewes, opening the lid of the teapot and glaring in at the tea. "It just shows how we allow ourselves to be imposed on. She was quite alone in London — her circle is most limited — and so we asked her. You've no idea, my dear, the difficulty of getting up a Christmas party in London. You see, every one who is desirable naturally has his own friends and wants to be with them at a time like this. Of course that limits any one asking a party; but she's a nice girl, and I wanted some one that I need n't keep an eye on every minute, so we asked her, and she came down with us yesterday, and what do you think is the result? This very afternoon, before she had been our guest twenty-four hours, if I did n't catch her sitting in this room with John!"

"On his lap!" cried Leslie.

"On his lap!" Mrs. Lewes' tone was one of un-

speakable horror. "Mrs. Revere, what a mind you must have!"

"But —" Leslie looked bewildered.

"No, not on his lap. John is not that kind of man. No, I should think not. No, indeed! No, not by any means!"

"But where was she sitting?"

"She was sitting in that chair, and he was sitting in this."

"But what harm was there in that?"

"No harm. No harm at all."

"But you said —"

Mrs. Lewes raised her hand majestically. "The harm was this," she said solemnly, "the door was shut!"

"Oh!" Leslie said.

"I sent John out of the room at once. I sent him out gently, for I would n't have him suppose that such an idea as that he might marry Miss Lovejoy could by any possibility ever enter my head. But I took her in hand then and I talked to her. I soon had her weeping; you saw her when you came in. The very idea! Do you want any more tea?"

"No," said Leslie faintly. "If my trunks have come, I think I'll go and unpack."

"I should think that you had better. I should think that you had certainly better! We dine at half-past seven, prompt!"

As Leslie climbed the staircase to her own little private refrigerator she felt very blue indeed. She wished with all her heart that she had n't come. Her trunks were now in the room, the big one sitting on the small one, with its lock neatly against the wall. It looked as if Dabbs was still learning.

As soon as she saw the trunks she thought of her keys, and a frightful new kind of chill wave swept over her. She felt the grip of despair. For a minute it seemed to her that the only course open to her was to take her trunks and flee to the Man and the Hen. It seemed as if that would be simpler than to get the keys from Witney. How could she get them! Oh, it was awful!

She sat down on a chair and tried to think. While she was thinking, there came a tap at the open door. She looked up; it was Maurice of the merry eyes.

"Oh, then you're not frozen hard?" he said. "What is the matter?" he added quickly, noting her distress.

"I'm in dreadful trouble," said Leslie.

"What have you been doing? Talking to John Phillips in public?"

Leslie did n't smile, for his fun did n't strike her as funny. "I want my keys," she said.

"Have you lost them?"

"No, a man has them over at the Man and the Hen."

"How very inconvenient for you. Shall I run over and get them and not say anything about it to any one?"

"Oh, if you would!"

"Well, I will. Right off, too. What's his name?"

"Ralph Witney. He's English. Is it far?"

"Five minutes' walk."

He went off at once. Leslie put her travelling-rug about her and was patient. He was only ten minutes in all. While he was absent she found a baby fire-place hidden in one corner. When he returned with the keys she thanked him heartily. He stood still after his thanks and seemed disinclined to go.

"What a beastly cold room you've got. I thought I had the coldest room in this place, but this is worse."

"Yes," said Leslie, "but you can't stay in it even with the door open. I want to unpack."

"Can't I help?"

She looked at him. He had very merry eyes, and Witney was at another hotel, and Hugo in Paris. It seemed very hard to have to think of either of them under the circumstances.

"Do let me help you?" said the new man, and his voice was very sweet and low.

"Oh, dear!" said Leslie. "Oh, dear me!"

Maurice stayed and helped.

CHAPTER X

LESLIE AND THE MAN AND THE HEN

THE next morning Leslie woke thinking that now she knew all that there was to know about her holiday environment. She was n't happy, for she was cold. She had been cold all night, and it is very disagreeable indeed to be cold all of a first night in a place where one expects to spend a week. Without being in the least superstitious, it may be regarded as the surest of all bad omens to come true.

She lay still for quite a while wondering what to do. It was clearly late, for the light was very bright, and this was December. While she was wondering, with her eyes widely fixed upon the ridiculous, little, one-foot-by-three of red rep canopy over her head, she suddenly perceived something that looked so like a bell-rope that she thought that she would try pulling it, anyhow. The room was so very cold that her outstretched arm winced perceptibly as she

stretched it out, but she rang. There was a long wait, and then she rang again. No answer.

She waited again and then, hearing a clatter in the hall, she called loudly, but without effect. Then she rang again, and finally Maurice came to the outside of the door and told her who he was through the crack.

"Can you get some one to make me a fire?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said. "Everything is awfully behind this morning because the dog overslept. But I can try. Is n't it cold?"

"And I want hot water! And my mail."

"You can't have any hot water; it is n't equal to getting up the stairs hot. And as for your mail, you can't have that, either. It's all carried to Mrs. Lewes, and it has to wait until she has time to go through it first. I was thoughtful enough not to leave a forwarding address, however, so I don't care."

"You don't really mean what you say?" (All this through the crack.)

"Oh, but I do. The dog was so cute yesterday he took one of the letters in his mouth and put it in the fire. There was something almost human in the way he did it."

Leslie did n't laugh. "Try to send me up something hot," she begged.

"Well, I'll try, but don't hope, for the spirit of the house is getting into me and I may not remember your existence if I get where I can feel a fire. You ought to test the temperature of my room."

"Thanks," said Leslie. "I don't want to test the temperature of my own. Do go and find some one and get a fire made here."

"I'll try," promised Maurice, and he went away whistling. After a long, long time a chambermaid came upstairs and fought half-heartedly with the little grate for a little while. During the battle Kimberly came in and said Mrs. Lewes would like to know what time Mrs. Revere was coming down, if she was coming down.

Leslie got up at that and dressed and went down. She found Mrs. Lewes in the sitting-room with her husband and Miss Lovejoy. She was speaking as Leslie entered and went right on: "Perfectly absurd, as I have told you a hundred times. It was n't as if he knew her well or as if she were an old friend; it was just a bore for him, and now he's all used up and he does n't know what's the matter with him. It was very kind of John to offer to take him to walk

this morning, and so far from being vexed about it, Frederick, you should be grateful. You were not here, and he was so restless, and John offered. I was going to send Kimberly out with him, but he'd far rather go with a man than a woman. So now don't say another word about it. Good-morning, Mrs. Revere; are you always as late as this getting down, and who do you know at the Man and the Hen?"

Leslie sank abruptly into a chair. "I don't want any breakfast," she said, quite bewildered by the complication so suddenly thrust upon her.

"It's kept for you, anyway. Common courtesy demands that, in any case. But who do you know that is stopping at the Man and the Hen? You have a letter from there this morning. Frederick, I wish you and Miss Lovejoy would go to walk or leave the room."

Mr. Lewes and Miss Lovejoy promptly left the room. Mrs. Lewes never had to speak twice to any one.

Leslie took a seat and felt as if she were in for a nervous chill.

"Press the bell," said Mrs. Lewes; "they'll bring your breakfast directly."

"But I don't want breakfast," Leslie protested. "It's nearly eleven o'clock."

"You don't need to tell me that, my dear; I have n't sat here waiting for you since nine without knowing that it's now eleven. I don't know either what you expect of your guests, but mine usually come to breakfast or else let me know the night before. And now see what else you've done—made me have to send Frederick, who is my husband, and Miss Lovejoy, who is my friend, from the room. Press the bell."

"But why send them from the room?" Leslie was clearly puzzled.

"I did n't wish to humiliate you by discussing your private affairs before others, but —"

Roberts, the duke, opened the door.

"Roberts, close that door; I am occupied. Here, make up the fire before you go."

Roberts made up the fire and departed.

"My private affairs!" said Leslie, puzzled.

"Yes; I must know, and at once, who you know at the Man and the Hen!"

Leslie looked staggered. She had not calculated on anything like this. Finally she determined not to

lose her temper. She replied, "I know an Englishman who is stopping there."

"Why did n't you ask him here; we would have entertained him. Our hospitality knows no limits, and he could have slept with Maurice. No, that is no explanation of your secretiveness. What was your real reason for concealing him at the Man and the Hen?"

"I did n't conceal him."

"I don't know what you call concealment, then. You have n't mentioned him to any of us. You are not telling me his name, even now. I'm afraid, my dear, your long residence on the Continent is sadly undermining your good American morals. What is your object in having a man down here to whom you are unwilling to introduce your friends? And whatever it is, why withhold the truth when questioned?"

Mrs. Lewes' tone was most severe. Leslie, in spite of a clear conscience, could n't for the life of her help looking very unhappy. Just then Frederick opened the door. "Cecilia and I were going to walk," he said, in a certain plaintive key to which he was much addicted, "and now I can't find her anywhere."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Lewes, "you don't need to go to walk. You can go with the dog after lunch."

I want you now. Leslie is going to tell who she knows at the Man and the Hen, and I want a third person to be present."

Mr. Lewes took off his hat and coat at once and put on his glasses with the hasty importance of a doctor called to the last gasp of appendicitis. "At the Man and the Hen, ah?" he said. "Yes, well, at the Man and the Hen?"

"Go on, Leslie," said Mrs. Lewes.

Leslie was now dangerously near to being really angry. "His name is Ralph Witney, and he's down here to hunt," she said.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewes contemplated one another solemnly at that, apparently finding its simplicity beyond all their expectations. Mrs. Lewes rallied first, "What do you say, Frederick?" she said then.

"A very strange story!" said Mr. Lewes, with great emphasis, — "a very strange story indeed!"

"Exactly what I was thinking," said his wife.

"What I can't understand is his staying at the Man and the Hen," went on her husband. "As soon as John comes in, we must consult him."

"Why not send Dabbs for him at once," suggested Mrs. Lewes. "Press the bell."

Leslie began to think that she was indeed Alice in Wonderland. She got up and pressed the bell.

"Perhaps I had better go over to the Man and the Hen," suggested Mr. Lewes, then, "or do you think it would be wiser to wait and take the dog?"

"Oh, it would never do to take the dog," said Mrs. Lewes. "It might excite the dog."

"But —" began Mr. Lewes.

"Leslie, do you mind leaving the room," said Mrs. Lewes, "I want to be alone with Frederick."

Leslie left the room. She felt herself to be in a terrible situation. But it's always darkest just before the dawn, and in the hall she found Maurice that instant in from a walk and in the act of hanging up his cap. At the sight, she felt as if she had known him forever. She hurried to him and began as rapidly as possible:

"You are just who I want. Run — run as quick as you can to the Man and the Hen and beg — pray — implore — just *make* Mr. Witney leave town at once. Tell him I'll do anything for him — in London. Tell him I'm in a dreadful mess on his account. Tell him anything! But get him to go — and please run."

Maurice seized his cap, gave her one look of deep sympathy and thorough understanding, and fled.

She went into the maid's room to wait. Kimberly was there, threading fresh ribbons in the dog's nightcap.

"It's very cold here," Leslie said, wondering how fast Maurice could run.

"I've no fireplace," said the maid, narrowing a general statement down to her own quarters. "I never see such a place. And that Alice — she never brings me so much as a clean towel. And the dog so cold that he jumped into bed with me last night, and I had to get up and take his mattress."

"Does he always wear a nightcap?" Leslie asked, wondering what she would do if Witney should be out.

"Oh, madame, you ought to see his London nightcaps! A real lace butterfly set in each side for him to hear through! These are just Cash's Frilling for the country."

"I'd like to see him in one," said Leslie.

Just here Miss Lovejoy looked in the door. "I'm going out and wait in the street," she said. "You tell Mr. Lewes, will you? I've waited indoors as long as I'm going to wait." She spoke vexedly.

"I'll tell him when I see him," Leslie promised.

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, with Mrs. Lewes."

"Well, I'm gone," said Miss Lovejoy, and went.

After a long while the sitting-room door banged, and Frederick, his visage painted the colors of living woe, came hurriedly in.

"Dear, dear," he said, taking maid and guest into the same grasp of grievous tidings, "you don't know what's happened now."

"What?" asked Leslie.

"Arabella will want to tell you herself. Be very tender with her. She has already had so much to bear to-day."

In fear and trembling Leslie accompanied her host back to her hostess. They found Mrs. Lewes greatly agitated.

"You'd better leave us, Frederick," she said to her husband; "it will be easier for us all if I tell her when we are alone."

Frederick went out at once. Leslie sat almost trembling. She did wonder what had happened now. If Hugo — !

"My dear," said Mrs. Lewes, transfixing her guest suddenly with her cold, gray, eagle eye, "what do you think! Dabbs has taken John's golf clubs and gone golfing!"

"Oh, dear," said Leslie. In spite of herself she felt relieved.

"Did you ever hear of anything like that? You know he was n't a regular valet. We took him out of a cake shop because he was so willing. And now this is what comes of it!"

"What will you do?" Leslie asked, hardly sure as to whether she were going to laugh or shriek.

"I don't know what Frederick will do. He is going to try and calm himself first. I told Frederick that if he was going to bring a valet down here, it would be better to get a real one. Dabbs is n't any use at all; why, he does n't even answer to his name, because he's been accustomed to being called Jim; he's of no service whatever!"

Leslie sat quite still, observing the limits of her self-control. She was at a complete loss as to what to say or what to do. Life seemed as detached from the ordinary as it would be if the laws of gravitation should suddenly cease. She wished that she were in London with Mr. Delauney Dane. He was so easily comprehended.

"And this is the day before Christmas," said Mrs. Lewes, after a slight pause. "I wanted it to be such a merry day for every one. Whether you feel like it or

not, you must get up to breakfast to-morrow. I've sent for the cook and told her how to make the pudding. She had a receipt, but I could n't think of letting her use it. I never allow any one to do their way where I am."

"I'm sure we'll have a lovely time," said Leslie.

"Well, I hope so, for this whole expedition is half killing me, and Kimberly gave me a terrible turn this morning by telling me that Maurice has been down to the bar twice,—of course that means that he's falling in love with the barmaid."

"Not necessarily," said Leslie.

"My dear, I know! I read character at a glance, and Maurice is one of those men who are always in love with some one."

Just here Maurice entered, smiling.

"Have you been down at the bar again?" Mrs. Lewes demanded instantly.

"No, I've been out to do an errand."

"Why did n't you send a servant? What are servants for?"

"I wanted to go myself."

Leslie was looking at him in an agony of question. He smiled brightly at her. She felt relieved, rose, and quitted the room.

"Maurice," said Mrs. Lewes, in a tone of sternest prohibition, "you must be very careful. That is a dangerous woman. She has an affair with a man over at the Man and the Hen, and except for my principle of always looking over every one's letters I never should have even known of it."

"I'll be careful," Maurice promised.

"Yes, do," said Mrs. Lewes. "You did n't see anything of the dog while you were out, did you?"

"No."

"I'm afraid John is taking him too far. They get interested in one another and don't notice how far they go. I do wish you had seen him when he came in to breakfast this morning, putting one paw in front of the other. And he walks just the same way with his hind legs, too."

Just here the dog and John Phillips burst into the room.

"I've been insulted!" cried John Phillips.

"Insulted!" cried Mrs. Lewes. "Maurice, press the bell."

"Insulted!" repeated her brother.

Maurice started to leave the room.

"Don't leave the room," his hostess commanded;

"sit down. It will be better for some one else to be present."

"It was the hostler at the Man and the Hen," began Phillips.

"At the Man and the Hen," said Mrs. Lewes. "Quite what I might have expected from what I have just been learning of the place. Go on, John. Pay attention, Maurice; this may be very important."

"The dog caught one of their ducks in his mouth —"

"Caught one of the ducks? Not really? I always said he had hunting blood, and you never believed me. Did he only catch one?"

"He might have caught ever so many more, for there were ever so many more in the yard, but the hostler came out and in a most offensive manner ordered me off the premises."

"Ordered you —" Mrs. Lewes' voice died away, strangled in wrath. It was fully ten seconds before she rallied sufficiently to say, "Press the bell."

Maurice pressed the bell.

"Did Dabbs take my clubs up to the golf-links? I told him to do so," John Phillips asked presently.

"Did you tell him to? Why, we thought he'd gone up there to play golf."

"To play golf! How absurd you are, Arabella. A valet playing golf."

"I thought it odd," observed Maurice.

"I wish you'd leave the room," said Mrs. Lewes. "I want to speak to my brother alone."

The Earl of Arran was occupying the fire to that extent that Maurice did n't mind leaving it.

"But don't go down in the bar," Mrs. Lewes called after him.

He went into the next room, where he found Leslie looking out of the window.

"Hello," he said cheerfully. "I must n't speak to the barmaid, or fall in love with you, or crowd the dog from the fire. I'm to have no Christmas fun at all."

Leslie did n't smile. "Do you know, I have n't been given my mail yet," she said. "I'm getting mad."

"Oh, don't get mad," said Maurice; "fall in love; it's so much handier and easier and pleasanter, and it will be great fun fooling every one. Let's have the jolliest kind of an affair. Come on; I will if you will!"

Leslie shook her head, but there was a mournful sort of wistfulness in her shake at which any grown-up man might have taken heart.

"I must tell you about my going to the Man and the Hen."

"Oh," Leslie interrupted, "did you see him?"

"Is that man 'him'?"

She turned and gave him a look.

"Well, you said 'him,' and I did n't know," he murmured apologetically.

"Did you see Mr. Witney?"

"Yes, I did; and he said he could n't leave to-day, because he was hunting to-morrow, but he 'll go in the afternoon."

"What must he think!" she ejaculated.

"He did n't tell me. But he wants to speak to you, and I'm to take you to walk at five to-night and turn you over to him just beyond the city limits."

"But how can we get out?"

"I 'll have to manage that."

"Can you manage it?"

"I can manage anything."

"But you know I've been warned against you."

"And I've been warned against you too."

"But I 'm in love, so I can't get into trouble."

"I make a specialty of women in love."

Then Leslie had to laugh.

"Well," she said, "you manage it and I 'll go."

CHAPTER XI

LESLIE AND MAURICE

THE day before Christmas wore onward with much discussion and a tremendous amount of pressing of the bell.

"It seems as if no one knew what you wanted when you press a bell here," said Mrs. Lewes finally, and in great wrath she sent for the landlady and said something to her which put her in bed for twenty-four hours. Later in the day Kimberly ran on to Alice and the Boots in their favorite angle in the upper hall, and as a result Alice and the Boots were turned heartlessly out upon a cold world.

"I never saw such a house," said Mrs. Lewes, fiercely waiting for tea. "No wonder the dog can't sleep nights! He knows what's up."

"He knows more than I know, then," said Maurice. "I wish I were as wise as he."

"He's very wise, that's a fact," said John Phillips, eyeing the dog tenderly. "You ought

to have seen him when that hostler addressed me that morning. Such contempt! Such absolute disdain!"

Mr. and Mrs. Lewes looked first at Phillips and then at the dog, and continued to contemplate the latter in a sort of silent ecstasy of tenderest admiration until tea was finally brought in.

Miss Lovejoy came in from somewhere else at that and sat at the table; Leslie went to her seat.

"Come and sit down, Maurice," said Mrs. Lewes; "you 're keeping the dog from the fire."

Maurice came and sat down; Lewes sat down; John Phillips sat down. Everybody received tea. There was a pause.

"Well, Maurice," said Mrs. Lewes, "say something bright."

"I don't feel bright," said Maurice.

"I 'll tell you what we 'll do, if you like," said John Phillips; "you make a pretense of springing at my throat, and then we 'll see what the dog will do. We 've always wondered."

Maurice stirred his tea. "All right," he said slowly. "Of course you don't care what I do to the dog if he resents my action against you."

"What would you do?" Leslie asked.

"I'd break both his fore legs with one smashing blow."

"Oh, no, don't do anything like that," said Mrs. Lewes. "I wonder at John's proposing such a plan. It would be almost sure to get him in the habit of springing, and he does it enough now. He knocked the laundress down last week, and she is so afraid of him she won't come any more."

"Silly fool!" said Lewes.

"Shall I cut the cake?" Leslie asked.

"Ask if any one wants any first. There's no use cutting it otherwise."

Leslie asked every one and no one wanted any.

"There, now, you see how wise I was," said Mrs. Lewes. "Frederick, what has Dabbs done this afternoon?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Lewes. "I have n't seen anything of him. Have you, John?"

"No," said John Phillips, "I expect he's gone out for a walk. He's never been in the country before, and it interests him."

"I wonder if he would n't be more useful if you put him in livery?" suggested Mrs. Lewes. "I had an idea that valets were always busy."

"Mine always is," said Maurice.

There was a distinct sensation.

"Have you got a valet?" asked John Phillips at last.

"Yes, I have a valet," said Maurice.

"Why did n't you bring him with you?" said Mrs. Lewes; "we would have entertained him gladly, and he could have slept with Dabbs."

"They could have worked together," said Lewes; "he could have taught him some of the tricks of the trade probably."

"My man 's French," said Maurice, "so I 'm afraid he would n't have been of much service in instructing Dabbs. And I did n't bring him, because I let him go and spend Christmas with his wife."

"Ah, married, I perceive," said Frederick.

"Yes," said Maurice, looking pleasantly at his host; "how quick you are at drawing deductions."

Miss Lovejoy was gazing at Maurice as if that young gentleman actually wore his valet twisted in a halo around his head. Miss Lovejoy was very happy, even though cold. She felt herself to be somebody with these tremendously rich Americans. No one of her own nationality knew that she existed.

John Phillips, having had all the bread and butter

he wanted, began to feed the rest to the dog. This troubled Leslie, who had n't had all the bread and butter that she wanted by any means. Maurice, divining her void, took four pieces at once and gave her two. Nobody noticed, as the conversation had opened up on the *faux pas* of the ambassador's wife. Goodness knows what those abroad would do if ambassadors' wives ever behaved like ordinary mortals. Leslie ate her two bits of bread and butter and felt more and more drawn towards Maurice. She found the provision for her hunger more welcome than that offered to her intellect.

"He never would have gotten the place but for her money," John Phillips said finally; "everybody knows that."

"It's a dreadful thing for our representatives to make a laughing-stock of themselves," said Mrs. Lewes, looking severely at Maurice; "real ladies and gentlemen are never funny."

"I am," said Maurice.

Frederick Lewes regarded him earnestly. "You just think you are," he said, "I used to be the same way when I was young."

"Oh, no, Frederick," said his wife, "you always had whiskers."

At this Maurice sprang up from the table. "I'm going out to walk," he said. "Come on!" He spoke directly to Leslie.

Every one at the table looked quite as startled as when the new valet had been sprung upon them without warning.

"Where are you going?" Mrs. Lewes asked; she really appeared distinctly upset.

"I don't know," said Maurice, "but we've got to hurry or we'll be late. Come on."

Leslie rose, and they had said *au revoir* and were absolutely gone before the others had collected themselves.

"Well, I never," said Mrs. Lewes; then, "What do those two mean!"

"I can't understand it at all," said Lewes, looking very blank indeed. "She's older than he is, too, isn't she?"

John Phillips gave the last bit of bread and butter to the dog, with the air of one on whose head the heavens have newly fallen.

"We must watch them closely," his sister said. "I am afraid our hospitable spirits have taken in two very strange people."

"I never was in favor of this plan of coming down

here," said John Phillips. "It is n't doing the dog a bit of real good."

"And this disagreeable complication with the man at the Man and the Hen," said Mrs. Lewes, "that worries me more than I like to say."

"And with the ducks at the Man and the Hen, too," interposed John Phillips. "I think the ducks quite as serious as the man."

"Well, in a way," said Mrs. Lewes. "But we know all there is to know about the ducks and we know almost nothing about the man; she eludes discussion in a most trying manner. I never would have thought, from just meeting that woman in London, that she would be one to know a man at the Man and the Hen down here."

"I always thought she was queer," said John Phillips. "You remember I asked her to the Savoy to dinner one Sunday and she refused."

"You never really get to know people unless you live right under the same roof with them," said Frederick Lewes, with a sad intonation.

"Don't speak in that tone, Frederick," said his wife. "You'll depress the dog."

"He's depressed already," said John Phillips.

In the meantime Leslie and Maurice had begun to get far out on a country road.

"Where are we to meet Mr. Witney?" Leslie said. "Are you sure this is the right road?"

"No, I'm not," said Maurice. "It's been coming over me more and more for these last many minutes that I'm almost sure this is the wrong road. In fact, I'm getting quite positive about it."

It was very dark. The hedges on either side were dreadfully big and black. And it was cold; indeed it had been turning colder rapidly ever since sundown. In fact, it had been continually turning colder for two days.

"The wrong road!" said Leslie. "Then we've missed him!"

"Well, you said he was n't 'him' anyhow," said Maurice, "so it does n't matter much, does it?"

"Oh, but it does. He's English, and I'm awfully particular about English men."

"On the principle that even an English man may accidentally turn out to be 'him' in the end?"

But she was n't laughing. "Where are we?" she asked.

"I've been wondering about that, too," said the

young man. "I've been awfully busy wondering about that."

She stopped short. "Why, you are the most exasperating man I ever met in my life," she said. "You are even worse than —" She stopped herself just in time.

"Why did you stop?"

"Because I did n't want to go on."

"Do you know," said he, standing before her in the pitchy darkness and speaking with great distinctness, "you're just a bit exasperating yourself. I say, what a good time we're going to have boxing our way through Boxing Day."

"We have n't begun to box yet," said Leslie, turning sharply and beginning to walk back along the way over which they had just come; "but I'm not very much obliged to you for what you've done to-night. What will Mr. Witney think?"

"It does n't make much difference what he thinks," said Maurice, "but what does matter is what will they think at the house; for we're lost."

"Lost?"

"Yes, I don't know at all where we are; we must have taken some wrong turning, and I don't know when we took it. I don't know anything."

"You mean we won't be home in time to dress for dinner?"

"I don't think we'll be home in time for dinner. I'm quite sure about it. We shan't be home for ever and ever and ever so long." His tone had the happiest, most hopeful ring.

"Oh, but this is dreadful," Leslie cried, "especially with the kind of people we're stopping with. It would n't matter with some people, because we'd just tell the truth and they'd believe it; but no matter how we lie, Mrs. Lewes will never believe it."

"Yes, I've been thinking of that, too," said Maurice. "They'll wait dinner for us; I can just see the picture, can't you?"

Leslie began to laugh. "And yet I'm awfully vexed at you," she said. "Suppose Mr. Witney goes to the Guardian!"

"Yes, I've thought of that," said Maurice. "I've thought of that in ever so many ways. I've thought of that in as many ways as there are chances of his meeting different people or different combinations of people at the Guardian."

"Oh, dear!" said Leslie emphatically.

"But the worst of it all, you know, is n't what anybody thinks or what anybody may or may not

do; it's that we don't know where we are. I kept thinking we'd meet some one. I gave up thinking we'd meet Witney long ago, but I thought we might meet some one else, or see a house. But I can't see anything; can you?"

"No," said Leslie, "and I'm getting cold."

"I'm much colder than you are," said Maurice. "I'll lay you any odds that I'm the coldest, because I have n't any coat. I never wear one in the country."

"And all this is n't the worst of it," said Leslie slowly. "The worst of it is that I know a man who will surely hear of it somehow, and who won't like it at all." Her heart swept fiercely off to Hugo as she spoke, for Hugo never got really mired in any situation, and he was bitterly displeased each time that she splattered her metaphorical gaiters. Their parting seemed less final than previously now.

"Ah, then there is a 'him,' and I have n't to bother myself over falling in love with you," said Maurice. "I hate falling in love."

"No," said Leslie, straining her eyes in every direction for a light. "You have n't to fall in love with me. You may do it in spite of yourself, but it is n't obligatory and it will be quite hopeless. I think that I love another man."

Maurice whistled pleasantly. "Oh, well," he said, "if we can't possibly fall in love, it's quite all right for me to ask if I may put my hand in your muff. While there was any doubt I felt it might be an inartistic pushing of the game along too fast, but now I don't mind saying my hands are half frozen. I shan't bother you long. I warm up quickly, and as soon as I am warm I rather enjoy cooling again."

"Variety is the spice of life," said Leslie sententiously.

"Oh, I don't know," said Maurice, "I don't mind returning again and again to the same old muff."

Leslie could n't help laughing. She thought he was great sport. She was distressed over Witney, frightened over Hugo, uncomfortable over the waiting at the Guardian, but still Maurice's hand in her muff became at once a very real and present comfort in this hour of stress. She did n't know Maurice so very well, but she knew that she was going to know him much better.

The hand in the muff was holding her own "so nicely, so nicely," as Huntley remarks in "Lady Madcap."

She wondered. Maurice wondered, too.

CHAPTER XII

LESLIE AND HER ENGAGEMENT

THE wanderers got back about half-past eight. They entered the dining-room looking as penitent as was possible. Of course neither was dressed for dinner; and Mrs. Lewes in a blaze of expensive copies of famous jewels, and Miss Lovejoy in a fluffed muslin, raised curious looks from between the severe Black and White sketches of the two men. The dog, shaking violently, lay before the fire.

"We waited until eight," said Mrs. Lewes. "The soup got quite cold, and look at the dog."

"I'm so sorry," said Maurice; "even cold soup would seem warm to us, but of course with you — and the dog — it's different."

"The dog and I went out and looked for you," said John Phillips. "He's taken a severe chill. That's what's the matter with him!" John Phillips, who rarely allowed himself to express any especial emotion, expressed unlimited discontent on the dog's behalf now.

"I'm so sorry," Leslie murmured.

"We got a still more severe chill," said Maurice. "We got that awful kind of clammy, cold chill that you get when you're lost."

"Lost!" said Mrs. Lewes in an indescribable tone.

"Lost!" said John Phillips.

"Be careful, Arabella," said her husband. "You've started the dog to shivering again."

"It upsets him dreadfully to wait like that," said Mrs. Lewes severely. "He takes his atmosphere from us. We were all nervous, as was natural."

"And then he could n't understand going out just at dinner-time," said Phillips. "Any change upsets him. He was against going. You ought to have seen me trying to get him by the kitchen door."

"He knows when it's dinner-time just as well as we do," said Mrs. Lewes; "at least he knows it as well as the most of us do."

Maurice refused to bare his breast to these arrows. He continued eating his soup, and his calm attitude impressed Leslie with a sense of safety which was most agreeable under the circumstances.

"And so you were lost," said Frederick Lewes, going back on the conversational track. "Where were you lost?"

"That is what made us so late," said Maurice; "we had n't the faintest idea where we were lost, and so we kept on getting lost and lost."

"Oh, we've been so far," said Leslie wearily; "goodness knows how far!"

"Yes, I should think so," said Miss Lovejoy, in a pitying tone. "Whatever made you go so far?"

"We did n't want to go so far," said Maurice; "but we'd gone so far, and just a little bit farther yet before we knew it."

"Which way did you go?" asked John Phillips.

"We went down this street and over the bridge, and then we went miles and miles out of our way."

"Do you know that road, John?" said Mr. Lewes.

"Perfectly," said John Phillips. "You came to a white house?"

"Oh, no, we did n't," said Maurice. "We did n't go that road at all. I don't know where we did go, but I know exactly where we did n't go."

"We came to a house in the end," said Leslie.

"Yes, that was what made us come to any good end," said Maurice.

"Whose house was it?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything at all until I've had something more to eat." Maurice was that

rock around which conversation eddies but which it can never completely submerge.

Leslie came to his rescue, as she had finished her soup. "It was a house with a gate," she said; "a five-barred gate. And it was locked. He climbed it and went inside and warmed."

"Maurice!" cried Mrs. Lewes. "That was not gentlemanly."

"I was so cold," said the young man apologetically, "and I knew that she had a muff. And they were such nice, chatty people; I'm to go out there and take tea to-morrow."

Mrs. Lewes looked from her husband to her brother and back again, her expression indescribable.

"And what were you doing meanwhile?" she asked Leslie.

"I did n't know what to do," said Leslie. "I clung against the wall, and tried to look like ivy, and it was so hard."

"To look like ivy?" inquired Miss Lovejoy.

"No, the wall."

"I think that we will leave you," said Mrs. Lewes, rising abruptly; "the coffee was served in the other room some time ago. Frederick, speak to the dog. Don't be brutal, now."

Frederick tenderly persuaded the dog to go with them into the left-hand, private sitting-room. For the party had two private sitting-rooms and one private dining-room — not to speak of the whole second floor. Their entertainment was on a truly gorgeous scale, place and temperature considered.

"Now we can eat as long as we please," said Maurice. "I mean to eat ever and ever so long." He plunged madly into all that was being served him at once.

Leslie also began to eat more unrestrainedly. "But I'm worried over Mr. Witney," she said. "You must go over to the Man and the Hen as soon as you have finished and explain everything to him. Why, he's down here partly on my account."

"He's managing to amuse himself fairly well, anyhow," said Maurice. "The Man and the Hen is a snug little box, and he's warm at all events. I would n't worry over him if I were you."

"I wish we were at the Man and the Hen, if it's snug," Leslie reflected. "I wish I could go over there with you and pay him a visit and get warm."

"It is hard being cold so steadily," said Maurice; "my one comfort is that I'm looking to see it kill the dog."

"I've got nothing against the dog," said Leslie, "only he stops up the fire so. But you must go over and see Mr. Witney," she added; "you'll have to do that, you know."

"He'll be abed and asleep before I've finished," said Maurice. "I have n't really had what I call a square meal since I came down here. Watch me!"

After a while he did finish, however, and although it was not entirely too late to consider the Man and the Hen, they did n't go there nor refer to it again, for the very simple reason that Leslie forgot the whole thing, and Maurice did n't remind her. They went into the right-hand, private sitting-room, which was reserved for smoking, and there found Mr. Lewes smoking, and the dog looking sombrely into the fire.

"Arabella wants to speak to you," Mr. Lewes said to Leslie directly she entered; "she wants to speak to you immediately. Maurice, you'd better stay here."

Leslie looked frightened. "I'll go to her at once," she faltered.

Accordingly she went out of the right-hand, private sitting-room, and into the left-hand, private sitting-room, where she found Mrs. Lewes, Miss Lovejoy, and John Phillips sitting around the fire.

Leslie looked at the three and had as bad a fit of depression as that from which the Earl of Arran had lately suffered.

"Leave us alone," said Mrs. Lewes to her brother, and Miss Lovejoy, and the two at once got up and left the room.

"Sit down," said Mrs. Lewes to Leslie.

Leslie moved to a seat. She wished like anything that she were married to Hugo, or betrothed to Witney, or eloping with Maurice, or anything; but she was n't, so she just sat down.

Mrs. Lewes scanned her in silence, then, opening her closed hand, she held out a piece of paper, — a hastily scribbled line or two. "Read that," she said.

Leslie took it and read: "Unable to understand but will leave as requested. St. Sanctus' Club, London." She read it twice.

"Unsigned, you perceive," said Mrs. Lewes.

"Yes. Whose is it?"

"Yours."

"Mine!"

"Yes."

"But where did you get it?"

"It was delivered here about quarter to eight. We waited until eight and then opened it."

Leslie clasped her hands tightly. She felt unable to speak.

"What have you to say?"

"Nothing. There's nothing to say."

Mrs. Lewes looked at her in some surprise.

"What should I say?" Leslie asked.

"It is from the man at the Man and the Hen, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

"Did you ask him to leave?"

"Oh, yes."

"Why did you do that?"

Leslie paused. It was Christmas Eve, and she felt something was due to the day — or the night.

"I could n't very well see what else to do," she said frankly; "the situation seemed impossible —"

"Wait," said Mrs. Lewes, "I want Frederick to hear this. Press the bell."

"But I don't want him to hear it," said Leslie, unclasping and then re-clasping her hands, and trying to retain control of her judgment.

"Press the bell," commanded Mrs. Lewes.

Leslie rose and pressed the bell.

"And now I must tell you something for your own good," said Mrs. Lewes, "and that is that you can't

go on behaving in this way very long and expect to be received by women above reproach, like my husband, my brother, and myself."

Leslie was holding her hands so tightly clasped that all feeling had gone out of them. "What have I done?" she asked.

"Done! You have been here barely twenty-four hours and you have already practically forced an inoffensive man to leave his hotel, and you have nearly lost Maurice!"

Just here Maurice himself appeared in the door.

"Please leave us alone," said Mrs. Lewes.

Maurice came in at once and sat down. "I can't," he said, "I'm lonesome. Every one's gone to put the dog to bed, and I was left by myself."

Mrs. Lewes started to her feet at that. When the dog came to the fore, the universe and all else which might have been, exploded in thin air for her. "He must wear his chest-protector to-night," she exclaimed, and hurried out.

Leslie was looking in the fire. She did n't turn her face at all.

"It is n't Mrs. Lewes in this room now, it's me," said Maurice. "What's the matter?"

"I'm losing my temper," she said slowly. "I'm not sure but that I've lost it."

"Don't. What's the difference between a huff and a muff? One you have alone and the other —"

"Don't be silly. I'm never silly, and I hate it."

"Are you never silly?" said Maurice, opening his eyes widely. "I'm so sorry. I thought that you looked as if you could be silly any time if you only had a chance. And now you say you can't. Oh, *dear!*"

Leslie stopped short; being silly had never been presented to her in just this light before. She felt a new conception of the word — and the world — opening for her. Perhaps —

Maurice recurred to his riddle. "I can fix it up better than that," he said eagerly. "Why is a huff like a muff? Because I've had a hand in each of yours."

She tried to laugh. "But really it's nothing to laugh over," she said a second later, feeling the laugh to be a failure. "I'm really angry."

"What about?"

"What's just been said to me."

"What was said to you?"

"I shan't repeat it."

"What was it?"

"But I think I'll go to-morrow."

"What rot. You can't."

"Why not?"

"Christmas Day. No trains."

She pressed her hands over her eyes. "I don't see why I ever came. I did n't know them so very well. And I thought it would be fun."

"Well, *is n't* it fun? I think it's no end of fun. I'm having a great time."

Leslie looked up at him with tears in her eyes. "I hate being a widow!" she exclaimed angrily.

"Don't stay one, then."

She looked at him, and he was laughing. Then her own sense of humor leapt to her aid. "Perhaps John Phillips — ?" she suggested.

"Oh, no — no — me!" said Maurice eagerly. "I tell you what we'll do. We'll go right into the other room now, and directly they all come back from hearing the dog's prayers we'll announce our engagement. Think of their faces!"

This idea was bewildering. The mental picture presented to the imagination outstripped all else in Leslie's mind for three seconds. She felt a veritable ecstasy of curiosity for a brief half-minute, but then reason returned and she said tentatively: "Only it

would n't be a real engagement, you know, because I don't want to marry you."

"That 's understood. It 'll be one of these wife-in-name-only kind of engagements. Think of their faces!"

The thought of their faces was most alluring to Leslie. "But it must n't get about," she said. "I only do it for a makeshift."

"We 'll pledge them to secrecy," said Maurice; "we 'll tell them that we 're telling nobody. Think of their faces!"

Every time he said that she felt her scruples going more knock-kneed. "It would be fun!" she confessed.

"Fun!" said Maurice. "It 'll be piles and piles of fun! No such circus ever honored Kenelm before. Think of their faces!"

"Shall you tell them to-night?" Leslie asked.

"Of course. What 's the use of waiting. Probably they 'll go to bed and let us sit up a little, if we tell them to-night. And even if we are n't engaged it 'll be pleasant seeing them all go to bed."

"Yes, I think so too," said Leslie; "but we must say we 're old friends."

"Oh, no. Oh, goodness, no! Then we 'll have to match stories all the time. Love at first sight. That 's the game. And it will be so romantic, too."

"But only twenty-four hours," Leslie protested.

"But you were irresistible, and I could n't think of trying to resist. Don't you see?"

"Yes, but — but afterwards — when I want to go?"

"Simplest thing in the world. We 'll quarrel in here — if there 's a good fire. I 'll go to play golf in a violent rage, and Mr. Lewes will see you off."

"Well — if I can depend on you," said Leslie very slowly; "but don't you go in for the game too strongly, because I 'm not in the mood to stand much more here."

"I won't be mean. I 'll play fair. And think of their faces!"

Leslie laughed aloud. It all struck her as most awfully amusing. So awfully amusing that any further consideration not only sank under, but went completely down for the third time.

"And now," said Maurice, getting up and walking about in a sort of active rage of invention, "which shall we do? Go in there, or let them come in on us accidentally? That 's the question."

She looked puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"Why, don't you see? We might keep it to ourselves for a little — just for the looks of the thing —

but if some one came in suddenly, of course —" he paused.

"Well?"

"Why, it would be all out."

"Why would it be all out?"

"Whoever came in would see at a glance —"

"At a glance —?"

"That we were engaged."

"I don't see how. You look just as usual."

"Of course I do, if I stay here. But if we were really engaged I should n't stay here."

She looked at him. He knelt on a big chair near the window, rested his arms on the back, and looked at the fire. There was quite a pause.

"How very silly you are!" she said finally.

"I thought you 'd say something like that if I — if I kept still long enough."

Her face flashed hot. "You started to say 'if you stayed there long enough,'" she exclaimed. "I know you did; I see it in your eyes. You're too mean. I won't play."

Then he jumped up very quickly. "Don't be vexed," he said imploringly. "I can't help teasing you — you're so easily teased."

"I am not easily teased."

"Well, what is it that you are?"

"I'm vexed."

"At me?"

"Yes; you're silly — Oh, don't do that!" for he had thrown himself down on the arm of the great chair in which she was seated.

"I'm doing no harm."

"My goodness me — don't; get up — somebody —"

"Now listen to me —"

"Oh, you will make me angry!"

"But, my dear —"

He was just about to say her whole name, but the hall door creaked, a gasp sounded at their backs, and, turning, they saw Mrs. Lewes standing transfixed behind them.

Maurice sprang up, beaming. "She has accepted me!" he cried happily.

Leslie thought that she should faint. If this reached Hugo! She saw now clearly that she loved him. Her sense of fun failed her suddenly. She felt dizzy.

But Mrs. Lewes was much more dizzy — much nearer fainting. She tottered towards a seat, exclaiming weakly, "Frederick must hear this. Press the bell."

CHAPTER XIII

MERRY CHRISTMAS

THE next morning a telegram came for Leslie from Paris. She did not know that for some time, however. Mrs. Lewes opened it to see if it needed to be sent up at once, but as it only said "Merry Christmas from Maxim's," she first thought of burning it, but finally laid it at her guest's place. When Leslie came down and saw it there, she read it with a sinking heart. The imitation engagement seemed more of a tragedy than a comedy, without Maurice's "Think of their faces" to back up its humor. Disapproval and suspicion fought in their faces now, always excepting that of Miss Lovejoy. Miss Lovejoy sat with her mouth slightly open in an attitude of unlimited wonder as to how under the sun Leslie did it.

Maurice was not present. Christmas or no Christmas, command or no command, betrothal or no betrothal, he had n't gotten up.

The breakfast was rather heavy, not because of the

amount of food consumed, but because Mrs. Lewes, her husband, and her brother were all three too full of emotions to have much room for anything else. They looked at Leslie, and then at one another, and then at Leslie again, and then at one another again. She felt most uncomfortable.

"Did you know anything whatever of Maurice before you met him here?" Mrs. Lewes asked presently.

"No," said her guest, wishing to heaven that she had n't come down to breakfast any more than Maurice had.

"I would n't engage a clerk on such short notice," said Frederick Lewes emphatically.

John Phillips, who was spreading jam on the dog's toast, shook his head as much as to say that he would n't either. There was a most painful pause after this.

"And *who* do you know at Maxim's?" Mrs. Lewes continued; then, "Nobody could be less desirous of interfering in the affairs of others than we are, but Maxim's is such a very strange origin for a telegram of the description of yours."

Mr. Lewes laid down his knife and fork at once and assumed an air of impartial but keenly observant inquiry.

"I don't know anybody at Maxim's," said Leslie rather miserably.

"You must know somebody there, since he (I trust it is a man; no lady would ever know a lady at Maxim's) — since the man had your address."

"I know so many men," Leslie almost wailed.

Again Miss Lovejoy's jaw dropped in a fresh access of wonder as to how she did it.

"I'm not sure that that statement is greatly to your credit, my dear," said Mrs. Lewes. "Indeed, I fear that you are much too rash in taking up with new situations. I don't know, I'm sure, what Maurice will say to that telegram. He is a man, and he has been in Paris, and under those circumstances he is almost sure to know of Maxim's."

"She might tell him it was from the cannon place," said John Phillips, who had time to think and time to talk, because he could eat nothing owing to the dog's voracity.

"John," said his sister, "I am surprised at you. The cannon place! The cannon place! As if Maurice had no brains at all! The cannon place!"

John Phillips subsided.

"How long had you known your first husband be-

fore you became engaged to him?" Mrs. Lewes went on presently.

"Not so very long," said Leslie, beginning to crave for Maurice's protection almost as ardently as if she had had real right to it; "but the family had known him always."

"It's quite the reverse in this case," said Mrs. Lewes. "We don't know a thing about Maurice. Not a thing!"

"And you must n't expect to find out about his finances from me," said Frederick, "for I know nothing whatever of them; he may be an adventurer for all I know. We entertain freely."

"Where did you meet him, anyway, Frederick?" said his wife. "On a Tottenham motor 'bus, was n't it?"

"No, Arabella," said her husband; "those were the people we took to the Riviera with us that I met on the 'bus. I can't think where I did meet Maurice. I meet so many people in so many places. It was since Thanksgiving, anyway; that I'm sure of."

Leslie felt a little appalled in spite of herself. "I might break it off," she said, looking down at her plate; "perhaps I was a bit hasty."

"That's easier said than done in England," said

Mr. Lewes. "Maurice knows that you have money, because we've often mentioned the fact among ourselves, and he may have you up for a breach of promise. It's a very common thing here, and, as you're older than he is, and a widow at that, he'll likely get very heavy damages."

"And he does look so innocent," said Mrs. Lewes. "I never in my life have seen a man that looks so innocent as Maurice. If he goes into court looking as innocent as he generally looks, you'll have no chance at all."

"And going to law in England is so complicated, too," said John Phillips, always feeding the dog. "You don't deal with your lawyer, and he does n't plead your case. They have other men for all that."

"And it's so far down in the city, too," said Mr. Lewes. "It's no use attempting it with the 'bus; even a cab takes forever. One just has to call a taxi."

"I hope you'll never take a 'bus again," said his wife, with great feeling. "You do meet the most curious people on 'buses. There was that Scotch lady you met on a 'bus and brought home to lunch, and she stayed four months. I'm almost sure Maurice is the man you met on the Tottenham 'bus. If he is n't, he's the man you went up the sliding stairs

behind at the Franco-British ; I 'm positive that he is one or the other."

"No, he is n't, my dear," said Mr. Lewes, looking at her in a state of mild and deprecatory contradiction. "You 've got them mixed. The man I went up the sliding stair behind at the Franco-British was a lord, that 's what happened to that man! I shall think presently where I met Maurice. I 'm thinking all the time."

"You see, we have such hosts of friends," said Mrs. Lewes, pretty much to every one at once ; "we are thoroughly American and thoroughly hospitable."

"It would really be interesting to know on an average how many Americans we feed and lend money to annually," said Mr. Lewes meditatively.

Just here the door opened and Maurice entered.

"Now, no kissing," said Mrs. Lewes instantly. "I absolutely prohibit it. It always makes the dog want to begin, and there 's no knowing what he may catch. He 's got a cold somehow, now."

Maurice went blithely around the table, shaking hands, and saying "Merry Christmas" to every one.

"Your breakfast is being kept for you," said Mrs. Lewes, rather white-Christmassy in manner herself ; "press the bell."

"Thank you so much." He pressed the bell. "Well, I feel very happy to-day." He sat down.

"Leslie has just had a telegram from Maxim's," said Mr. Lewes; "anonymous." He shot the last word out as if it, at least, were from the cannon place.

"Oh, I know who it 's from," Leslie said quickly.

"You know who it 's from!" Mrs. Lewes exclaimed yet more quickly. "Then you do know some one employed there, after all!"

"How is this," said Maurice most severely. "You know some one at Maxim's? Not Maxim's in Paris, I trust!"

He pushed back his chair and then, seeming to think better of it, drew it up again, and went on eating.

"I told you how he would feel," said Mrs. Lewes, raising her eyebrows very high indeed at Leslie. "It 's a man's natural view under the circumstances. Frederick would feel just the same way if it was me. Would n't you, Frederick?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Lewes, with a slight start; "oh, yes — yes; yes, surely!"

"There," said Mrs. Lewes, "you see how a man feels in such a case. I dare say Maurice would like to see the telegram. Would n't you like to see the telegram, Maurice?"

"Instantly," said Maurice.

Leslie took the telegram out of her pocket and handed it to him.

"I think perhaps, dear," said Mrs. Lewes, "that it would be as well if you and Miss Lovejoy left the room while we discuss this matter."

Leslie sprang from her seat and was out of the door before Maurice, who had crossed his knees under the table, could uncross them and get before her to open the door. Miss Lovejoy followed.

"Now, Maurice," said Mrs. Lewes, when the door was closed behind them, "tell us just what steps you are contemplating taking."

"And don't speak rashly," said Mr. Lewes; "don't let your temper run away with you. Weigh your words carefully. You have only known her for a very few hours, and you can see plainly that the word is 'Maxim's'! No doubt about that."

Maurice turned the telegram over.

"There is nothing but the address on the other side," said Mrs. Lewes.

"They never put anything but the address on the other side," said John Phillips.

"I think I'd better take her for a long walk," said Maurice; "we can take this telegram with us."

"No, I would n't do that," said Mrs. Lewes; "I would do nothing without witnesses."

"You are young," said Frederick Lewes; "two heads are better than one. We are all your friends, remember."

"Yes, that was why I proposed taking her with me," said Maurice.

"Don't keep turning that paper over and over," said Mrs. Lewes; "you make me quite nervous."

"Don't you think perhaps you 'd better give it all up?" said Mr. Lewes persuasively.

"It does seem rather a small thing to make such a fuss over," said Maurice, "and yet —" He paused and frowned.

"I did n't mean the telegram," said Frederick. "I meant the engagement. She never could hold you."

"I should n't think of asking her to try," said Maurice.

"No, of course not," said John Phillips.

The duke brought in Maurice's breakfast just here.

"I should think that you would think of your mother," Mr. Lewes suggested, when they were alone again.

"He has n't any mother," said Mrs. Lewes. "You're thinking of the man you met in the Tube

with the patent windmill; he was the one that had the mother!"

"Oh, my God, that patent windmill!" said Mr. Lewes. "Do you remember, John?"

"Fifteen thousand pounds!" said John Phillips feelingly.

"I do wish you would n't ever do any more business with any one you meet in the Tube," said Mrs. Lewes. "You've lost two or three fortunes in the Tube just this year."

"But I have got a mother," said Maurice, eating very fast.

"Yes, I thought so," said Mr. Lewes. "I had the idea of a mother distinctly connected with you in my mind. Well, then, if you've got a mother, why not think of her?"

"I do," said Maurice.

"That's good," said Mr. Lewes approvingly. "Now, let me ask you, don't you want us to look up Mrs. Revere's record? We don't know a thing about her, you know, but there's always the Pinkertons, eight dollars a day and expenses. If you've got any money at all, it might be as good a use as you could possibly make of it."

"The best possible, I should say," said Mrs. Lewes.

"There was that man at the Man and the Hen, you know, and then this telegram; and you never can tell who you may meet at our house! We entertain every one."

"With charity to all, with malice to none," said Mr. Lewes slowly and reverently. "That is our spirit. But really you had better let me write down the Pinkerton address for you. I always have it with me."

"We never move without it," said Mrs. Lewes. "The dog and the Pinkerton address we never leave behind."

"I should be very grateful," said Maurice; "it's always best to be on the safe side, is n't it?"

"She may not be a widow at all, you know," said John Phillips; "lots of widows are n't."

"Why, there was that widow that you —" began Lewes.

"There, Frederick, that will do," said his wife.

"Shall I write the Pinkertons for you?" asked Lewes kindly. "They know me. Business, and socially, too, you know. I can write before lunch."

"No," said Maurice, not wholly unaffected by this new and homelike light shed on the famous Secret Service, but nobly resisting the temptation to enlarge

his own circle; "no, I'll write myself. I want the engagement kept a secret, so I'd rather write myself, thank you."

"Oh, they won't tell any one," said Mr. Lewes; "they're used to all that kind of thing."

"They do everything quietly," said Mrs. Lewes. "Quietly, you know."

"Awfully close-mouthed lot, the Pinkertons," said John Phillips.

"And now," said Maurice, rising abruptly, "I think I'll get her and we'll go to walk."

They all knew that when he spoke in that tone he would go ahead and do it anyway, so no one tried to dissuade him from embarking on so rash a proposition.

"Only don't you get lost again," said Mrs. Lewes. "There must be no more coming late to meals."

"Oh, we'll keep in sight of the town," said Maurice.

"Dabbs and I are going up to play golf," said John Phillips.

"Any handicap?" said Maurice, with friendly interest.

"Oh, he just caddies," explained Phillips seriously. Thereupon those two men left the room.

Leslie, sitting upstairs by the saddest fire that ever eyes shone upon, heard a tap and then a voice at the

crack. "Come on, my dearest dear; we're going to walk."

She hurried on her things and joined him in the hall in two minutes. "If this goes on much longer I can't stand it," she said; "did you ever hear anything like it in all your life?"

"But what will you do? You would n't bolt with me, I suppose?"

"Oh, no; I don't think so now, at any rate. But heaven knows what I'll do in a fittle while. I'm so cold, and I'm so mad, and then, I'm so afraid —" she hesitated.

"What are you afraid of?"

She looked up into his face. "I'm horribly afraid that I shall burst out laughing in spite of myself."

He could not smother his glee at that thought.

"And besides I'm scared."

"What are you scared of?"

"I'm wretchedly afraid somebody'll hear of it."

"You can fix it all up."

"Not if their side gets to — to —"

"But it never will."

"I'm not so sure of that. They have such a wide and varied connection."

"Yes, but if he — he — if he loves you?"

"Yes, but if he loves me — and I'm not sure that he does — he won't stand any nonsense. He's that kind of man."

"Perhaps he does n't love you?" said Maurice cruelly. "That was n't a very tender telegram."

Leslie merely smiled. "But it *was* a telegram," she said; "and it means more for him to send one telegram like that than it does for the usual man to write a long daily letter."

"Dear me!" cried Maurice, "is he that kind of a man?"

"Yes, he's that kind of a man."

Maurice whistled. But he was not depressed; not Maurice.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DAY AFTER

CHRISTMAS DAY passed away, and ended pleasantly with Mr. and Mrs. Lewes and the dog retiring early, leaving Leslie and Maurice in the left-hand, private sitting-room, and Miss Lovejoy and John Phillips in the right-hand, private sitting-room. To the casual observer it would seem that Miss Lovejoy was learning how it was done.

The weather was turning colder and colder, faster and faster, every hour. The Guardian was beginning to feel as if it had been built seven hundred years ago at the very least, and around the window and door jambs there were chill little breaths quite pre-Roman in their sharp suggestiveness.

Leslie looked at Maurice standing before the fire until she felt as if she really must make a reality out of the engagement and go and lay her head against his cheerfully warm-looking bosom.

Maurice seemed to divine her thought. "I don't

think much of this kind of an engagement that we've got," he said; "it's lacking just where it ought to come out strongest."

"Y — yes," said Leslie doubtfully, "we just did it to see their faces, and when their faces are not here to see, it does seem — it does seem —" she stopped.

"Exactly my view of the case," said Maurice; "and now that they've all accepted it, and the room keeps getting colder, and you blush purple instead of pink — why, I find the situation lacking in humor."

"I know I'm purple," said Leslie. "Mrs. Lewes tells me so every five minutes. But I'm so cold!" The last words burst from her in a veritable wail.

"I declare, it's a shame," said Maurice fiercely. "Come here." He spoke with such terrible masculine energy that Leslie, who had a strong imagination, saw herself getting really-truly engaged to the wrong man just through sheer force of circumstances.

"Oh—oh, no!" she cried piteously. "Please! I'm so cold I don't know what I'm doing!" In an agony of fidelity to Hugo [who had never asked her] she sprang up and fled from the room.

Maurice, who had never asked anybody, laughed a little to himself, and then went down to the bar.

The next morning Kenelm was all but frozen over.

"Oh, my goodness me, why did I ever come here!" Leslie thought for the hundredth time since her arrival; and then she turned over in bed and decided not to get up till noon. Nobody came to build the fire, the room was frightfully cold, she could n't sleep, and so at last she decided that somebody must come, and, taking the bell-rope in both hands, she gave it such a jerk that it brought the whole thing down upon her head. The result of that was that she had to get up and fasten it deftly back so that it would appear as usual. As she did so she wondered if perhaps others had not done the same before. She wondered further if possibly the clue to its never being answered did not lie there. She wondered still further, then, if maybe that had not been the solution of all the unsatisfactory bell systems in old-fashioned hotels. She smiled a bit at the idea, and crept quickly down in among the bedclothes again. It was warm there, at all events.

An hour later a new chambermaid, procured Heaven knows where, came and built a fire. So that Leslie did finally arise and dress herself and go down. The right-hand sitting-room presented a cheery aspect as she opened its door. The shades were drawn and the curtains pinned together from top to bottom. There

was a roaring fire, and the Earl of Arran was roasting before it. Mr. and Mrs. Lewes, each with a shawl and a fur-lined motor-rug, sat near with morning papers.

"We never shall try this again," said Mrs. Lewes, raising her eyes at Leslie's entrance. "This is awful!"

"Have you seen the barometer?" said Lewes. "Unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable! A new departure in the history of England."

Leslie sat down as near the fire as she could get.

"We go up to town this afternoon," said Mrs. Lewes, speaking in a tone of decisive finality. "I have sent Maurice to take all the first-class compartments in the first train leaving after lunch. He is to reserve all the hot-water cans between here and London. We have our own rugs."

"And in this temperature John has gone to play golf!" said Mr. Lewes, taking a fresh wrap around his knees. "My dear," he said, turning to his wife, "did you notice here that the Duke of Connaught dines at Sandringham to-night? You remember we met him once — passed within ten feet of him on the pier at Brighton."

Mrs. Lewes paid no attention whatever to this bit of news regarding her royal friend.

"Where is Miss Lovejoy?" Leslie asked presently.

"I don't know," said Mr. Lewes. "Where is Cecilia, Arabella; do you know?"

"She walked to the station with Maurice," said Mrs. Lewes. "You must n't mind that, my dear," she remarked impressively to Leslie. "That 's the kind of thing that any woman that marries a man younger than herself has got to expect right straight along. You must make up your mind to it at once."

"Not —" said Mr. Lewes, looking judicially over his paper at Leslie, "not but what Miss Lovejoy must be older than you, you know."

"That is n't the point, Frederick," said his wife. "Miss Lovejoy might be old enough to be Maurice's grandmother and still the principle would remain the same."

"Look at the Baroness Burdett-Coutts," said Frederick, "forty years older than her husband! There was principle for you."

"Frederick," said his wife, "pray press the bell."

Frederick pressed the bell, but before any one could have possibly gotten round to answering it, the door opened suddenly, and the landlady flew in.

"Oh, my dears," she cried, "what do you think! Oh, what news! You 'll never believe me! And yet it 's true!"

Mr. Lewes turned pale, stooped forward, and grasped the dog firmly by the collar.

"Speak!" he said hoarsely.

"They 've run off together — those two. Taken the train for London!"

There were at least three speechless seconds.

"Frederick," said his wife then, leveling her eyes on him with the utmost severity, and speaking in a low, suppressed guttural, "what have I said all along! I told you the first time I laid eyes on Maurice that he had the face of a reformed cut-throat. I read character at a glance, and I knew. Do you remember where you met him *now*?"

Mr. Lewes adjusted his shawl and rug with the air of a man taking what precautions he can against the breaking storm. "You 're well out of this," he said feelingly, aside to Leslie.

"But only fancy their going off like that!" said the landlady, who was lively and chatty and adored her American visitors because they believed in reciprocity; "I never would have thought it — would you?"

"How about her luggage?" asked Mrs. Lewes suddenly and anxiously; "you had better hold it for her bill. We cannot possibly consider her in the light of a guest after this, you know."

"Hold his, too," interposed Mr. Lewes hastily; "he's no guest either, now."

The landlady did not look at all distressed over her bills. "But which will you have for luncheon," she asked, "mutton or veal cutlets?"

"I don't care which, but whatever we have we'll have it here," said Mrs. Lewes; "send me my maid at once."

The landlady went away at this gentle hint, but Kimberly, according to custom, did n't appear.

"Now you see, my dear, what comes of this kind of indiscriminate acquaintances," said Mrs. Lewes most bitterly, as soon as they were alone; "think how many experiences exactly like this we've been through. You never will learn anything. I was against asking Maurice from the first. Why, we don't even know his last name, and after twenty-four hours' continuous application you can't recall where you met him. It's worse than that Thames party last summer where you would invite the man who was the President's cousin and he went off with the whole house-boat while we were on shore making tea. Think of all the letters you have written the President about it, and he does n't pay the slightest attention. For my part, I don't believe that he was the Presi-

dent's cousin at all. I never did. Stop throttling the dog like that — he has n't done anything. I do wonder where Maurice is expecting to get married to-day!"

The door opened just here and Maurice looked in smiling.

"Oh, my gracious goodness!" screamed Mrs. Lewes.

"Oh — oh!"

Leslie started to her feet and Frederick came all untucked.

"What is it?" asked Maurice. "It can't be that you've heard the news, because I'm the only one who knows, and I've just come to tell you."

"To tell us what?"

"Of the elopement."

"The elopement! But we thought it was you!"

"Me!" Maurice looked charmingly, pleasantly, innocently puzzled. "Why, how could it be me? I'm engaged."

"There, Frederick," said Mrs. Lewes, in a tone sepulchral and hopeless, "I told you how it would be. It's that Dabbs. That's what comes of getting a valet who isn't a real one. This affair will be in every paper in England to-morrow, and when they come to us to know all about Miss Lovejoy, what are we to say!"

"By the way, Maurice," said Mr. Lewes in kindly aside, "while I think of it, what is your last name? You may have mail, you know, and then anyway, among intimate friends, I think it 's always pleasant to know the last name."

"My last name 's Benedict," said Maurice.

"Indeed! Benedict! I 'll just make a note of that. And now, my dear," turning to his wife, "I would n't take this too seriously to heart. Dabbs was of no service whatever, as you so frequently and justly remarked; and we both know what a drain as to money and little articles of wearing apparel Miss Lovejoy has been on you. Let bygones be bygones. The dog never liked her."

"Yes," said Maurice; "that would be all right if she had gone off with Dabbs. But she has n't. She 's gone off with Phillips."

At this Mrs. Lewes went over backward, shawl, rug, chair, and all.

CHAPTER XV

LESLIE AND THE LAST OF KENELM

LESLIE and Maurice retired to the other sitting-room during the reconstruction of their hostess.

"Oh, dear," Leslie said faintly; "oh, dear!"

"Exactly so," said Maurice. "I could n't possibly put it more neatly. 'You dear' would sound too pointed."

"Did you ever suspect such a thing?"

"No; I thought Phillips might run away with the dog, but Miss Lovejoy never once entered my head."

Leslie sat down before the fire, rested her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands.

There was a pause, and during the pause the door opened a bit and a mysterious hand agitated a telegram in their sight.

Maurice went and took it, and the hand at once shut the door and left them again alone.

The telegram was for Leslie.

"I declare, his attentions are getting really pressing," said the young man as he delivered it over.

Leslie tore it open quickly.

"Why are the Pinkertons looking you up?" she read aloud, in a frightened tone. "Oh, my goodness me, what does this mean?"

Maurice took the telegram and read it too.

"How does he know they're looking you up?" he asked in amazement.

"He knows everything," wailed Leslie. "He finds out everything. Don't ask me how he does it. I only know he does do it. We'd have been married long ago but for that."

She was too unfeignedly upset for Maurice to give vent to even a smothered smile. Instead, he managed to look at her in real sympathy, and he was still so looking at her when Kimberly coughed and then tapped.

"Come in," cried the man.

"If you please, Mr. and Mrs. Lewes would like to speak to Mrs. Revere alone," said the maid at the door crack.

Leslie choked down her agitation and left for the right-hand sitting-room at once.

It was hard to believe that it was the same couple

who had sat there so peacefully one short half-hour ago. Mrs. Lewes was now white and Mr. Lewes was now red, and both were most fearfully upset as to rugs and tempers.

"Did you guess anything of this beforehand?" Mrs. Lewes burst forth, the instant she laid eyes on Leslie; "did you suspect anything? Be careful what you say. Tell the whole story. Listen, Frederick, she is going to tell the whole story. Go on, my dear, only be careful. Be extremely careful."

"But I don't know a thing," said Leslie. "I never suspected such a thing."

"You hear, Frederick," said his wife; "she suspected nothing. And yet you say I ought to have looked after John more closely. What could I do beyond having him always keep the dog with him? A woman of my position cannot be running after a man of John's position all the time. And he knows all about her, — at least he knows as much as we know about her; he knows that we know nothing about her."

"Which is something," said Mr. Lewes, carefully adjusting his shawl afresh. "Why, she has on some of your stockings at this instant, Arabella."

"More than that, Frederick, — considerably more than that. I may say that all that is next to her —

but never mind. Well, my dear, so you suspected nothing. You see, Frederick, it is as I told you. She suspected nothing. She has an unsuspecting nature, the same as we have. It's the American pure-heartedness. It's what leads to all the swindlers in the world being American. We're so pure-hearted."

"But do you really think that there is anything to feel so very bad about?" said Leslie; "she was your friend—"

"Friend!" interrupted Mrs. Lewes with hasty scorn,—"friend! If you entertained as freely as we do, you would know what it means to have your brother run off with a mere friend. Where did we pick Cecilia up, anyway, Frederick?"

"She came with a lotion, did n't she, Arabella," asked the husband, "and her sweet disposition won us completely. We hold ourselves above class distinctions; we know no—"

"But we shall from now on," interposed his wife. "I'll never risk anything like this again."

"We try to live upright lives and give every—" began Mr. Lewes.

"And then they elope with my brother," said his wife, "as if this weather was n't enough misery."

"Now, you see, my dear," said Mr. Lewes, turning

to Leslie, "why we so strongly urged your setting the Pinkertons to look up Maurice —"

He was interrupted by Leslie's start and a scream of "Frederick!" from his wife.

"The Pinkertons —" he said, in great confusion, "why — ee, yes, the Pinkertons, you know, my dear, —"

"Yes, I know," said Leslie, not seeing, on the spur of the minute, whether to laugh or cry, "but it's me they're looking up, not Maurice."

"My goodness me," said Lewes, so astonished that it was pitiable; "why, how did you ever come to find that out?"

"You are so hasty, Frederick," said his wife, in a sort of passion of protest over his general stupidity; "she has n't found it out. It's you that are telling her. She does n't know a thing about it. To go back to John and Miss Lovejoy —"

"But why did you set the Pinkertons to look me up?" Leslie asked; "why did n't you just ask me whatever you wanted to know."

"Frederick," said his wife, rising, "I feel alarmingly faint. Help me to my room."

In an instant they were both gone, leaving the floor strewn with the waves of their rugs. Leslie did not

press the bell for some one to fold them; she piled the fireplace with fuel and then set about folding them herself.

Maurice came in almost at once.

"It was they who set the Pinkerton Agency on my trail," Leslie said briefly; "when shall we ever get to the bottom of all this! I only know one thing — when they go you must go too!"

"Well, but are n't you going too?"

"No, I 'm coming alone later."

"Why not with us?"

She looked down. "Because I don't want to," she said, then she raised her eyes and laughed. "I want to break the engagement now."

Maurice laughed too. "Oh, I understand. But I 'll see you in town?"

"Often, I hope," she answered briefly, "and you may meet the next train."

At that he took her hand and kissed it.

They two lunched alone; Mr. and Mrs. Lewes had theirs served to them privately — with the dog. Directly after luncheon preparations for the departure were in order. It was more than a little imposing, with Frederick and the dog in the first brougham, Mrs. Lewes and Maurice in the second, Kimberly and

Dabbs in a third (that needed varnishing badly), and the luggage on an omnibus behind. Leslie waved to them from the window.

"Most curious her remaining behind," said Mrs. Lewes to Maurice. "I cannot see how you permitted it, considering your feeling for her."

"Oh, we 've given all that over," said Maurice. "I like her, but she does n't understand me. Besides, she's so hopelessly uninteresting, just between ourselves."

"Oh, I know it," said Mrs. Lewes quickly; "we 've felt the same way. And so you 've given it over? Well, I 'm glad."

"Yes, so am I!" said Maurice blithely.

"And just see how she acted!" Mrs. Lewes said; "only three days in all, and there was you, and then Maxim's, and then that man at the Man and the Hen. And, do you know, I 'm almost sure that she was at the bottom of John's trouble, because if John had had anything else in the world to amuse him he never would have run away with Cecilia Lovejoy. No man would."

"I would n't, even then," said Maurice.

Mrs. Lewes patted his hand. "No, my dear boy, I know it. I know it only too well. What a comfort

you have been to us! Words fail me. And the dog is so fond of you."

Leslie, left alone, spent a quiet afternoon packing and went up on the four-thirty. It was frightfully cold, and she nearly died. Arriving in London, it was nice to see Maurice on the platform awaiting her.

"Oh, how sweet of you!" she cried.

"It was lonesome," said the young man briefly. "Heavens, what a trip we had! Little currents of cold air scampering all over. 'Aha, here's another ankle to nip!'"

Leslie laughed. She was most awfully glad to see him.

"Let's call it on again!" he whispered, in the cab, later.

"Oh, no!" she said with resolution.

"No?" he asked inquiringly.

CHAPTER XVI

LESLIE GOES FORTUNE-HUNTING

THERE is a great difference between London and Kenelm at all times, but at the time of which I write their special difference consisted in the fact that it was possible to keep warm in London. Some idea of the joy with which the Christmas guest got home may be derived from that consideration.

Leslie, delivered at her own door by Maurice, asked him to dinner, adding tactfully, "But I'm sure you don't want to come."

"I'm sure that I shan't come," he replied, "but may I come to-morrow?"

She thought that he might, and so they parted without setting any hour of rendezvous. Maurice went home to Park Lane (the Bachelor's Extension half), and his whilom fiancée went straight upstairs and to bed, with two hot-water bags, a roaring fire, and a pot of hot chocolate, each disposed where it would do the greatest possible good. There were a lot of letters, but none from Hugo, and when she was

well toasted and getting sleepy she revenged herself by thinking of Maurice until dreams claimed her. Thinking about Maurice was always pleasant, because Maurice was always pleasant himself.

He came the next morning and found her out. She was n't really out, but he had no way of knowing that she was having a visit from Rita Coghlan and did n't want to be interrupted. He scribbled a line on his card saying that he only stopped to ask if she 'd be at home at four and to telephone 112967803 Gerard at once if she would be.

"Oh, if we 'd known that it was him, he might have come up," Leslie exclaimed, much disappointed on seeing the card.

"We might telephone him to come back," suggested Rita.

"But Mrs. Snellgrove is lunching with Mrs. Batt," said Leslie, who, whenever she remembered it, was excessively conventional.

"But I 'm here," said Rita.

Upon that they telephoned, and Maurice came back. The luncheon was most gay, as, between the dual recollections of the two who had so lately been there, Miss Coghlan was fully and thoroughly introduced to Kenelm and its Christmas spirit.

"I wish I could see the dog!" she said enviously.

"I'll take you there to see him if you like," offered Maurice.

They canvassed the pros and cons of the idea for some time, but finally abandoned it.

"Then let's do something else that's fun," the young man suggested.

"It's too cold," said Leslie.

"It's grand out," said Maurice.

"Let's go out, then," suggested Miss Coghlan.

"It'll be cold," feared Leslie.

"But you must go if I say so," said Maurice.

"But you're not engaged still?" said Miss Coghlan,
— "at least — are you?"

"I think not; are we?" Maurice asked Leslie.

"Oh, no, indeed," said Leslie. "I would n't marry you for anything!"

"That looks as if it were all off — for me," said Maurice, and took the blow bravely.

"I have an idea," Miss Coghlan exclaimed. "Let us go out to the fortune-teller!"

Leslie dropped her fork. "Oh, let's!" she cried.

Maurice acceded readily, as he could n't possibly have refused in any case.

The contrast between his behavior and Mr. Dane's

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was most refreshing. ("When I take a man anywhere, I take a nice man," Leslie said to Rita, as they put on their hats in the other room.)

They walked to Piccadilly and saw a pleasantly disposed 'bus coming in sight almost at once.

"We will sit in separate seats and all be strangers," said Rita wickedly, "and then we'll see how we get on."

"Well, but can I be forward or must I be timid?" asked Maurice, who supposed this to be the first time they had played that game.

"You must be a gentleman," said Rita.

"But if he is a gentleman, and we behave too, we won't even speak all the way out," objected Leslie.

"There must be a proper way to do it, since your Kenelm friends made so many nice friends on 'buses," said Rita. "I thought — being American — you'd know how."

"Leave all to me," said Maurice; "if you are not too haughty, I'll wager anything I'm on speaking terms with both before we reach Hammersmith."

They climbed up at that and sat decorously down, each in a seat alone. The omnibus went lumbering on. It was astonishing how warm and pleasant it was in

the sunshine this bitterly cold day indoors. Leslie felt quite comfortable, and very happy.

"Fare," said the guard at her elbow.

She looked up with a start; she had no purse. "I've no money," she said to the guard; "that gentleman —" pointing to Maurice.

"Me!" said Maurice, in great surprise.

Leslie turned scarlet.

"Oh, well, of course, if I must," said Maurice, and paid, darting looks of astonishment all the time.

Miss Coghlan was laughing and Leslie was vexed. "I think this is a stupid game," she declared sincerely.

"It's never any game at all," said Rita; "no one ever sticks to it for three minutes."

Thereupon they all moved to seats close together and talked about Kenelm again.

"Where are you going to visit next?" Leslie was asked.

"I'm going to Germany," she answered.

"Are you going to stay long?"

"Two or three weeks."

"Shall you go too?" Miss Coghlan asked Maurice.

"Not if I know it," said the young man.

"Don't you like Germany?"

"I like London better."

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It is a very long ride to Hammersmith on an omnibus, and conversation is apt to run thin. It was n't long before Leslie wished they had n't come, or that Rita, at least, had n't come, with all her heart.

They got down finally at Wolverham Court Road and went prowling down the same old side street. The fortune-teller's house looked so exactly like every other kind of a body's house that they had great difficulty in locating it, even this time. After they found it, Maurice undertook to ring the bell and conduct all the negotiations. Accordingly he went up the steps and rang, and in due time the attractive maid appeared and smiled upon him. Rita and Leslie had thoughtfully turned their backs. He inquired if Miss Aubrey was at home.

"No," said the maid, "Miss Aubrey has gone to the Cat Show."

"Ah, to the Cat Show, eh," said Maurice, with Mr. Lewes' reflective and judicial air of accepting every statement, no matter how trivial on its surface, with an equally impartial judgment. "Well, to the Cat Show! And when will she come back?"

"I don't know," said the maid, eyeing her interlocutor with a puzzled air. "She was there yesterday, too."

"How long did she stay yesterday?"

"She stayed until half-past nine o'clock."

Maurice looked at his watch. "It is now half-past three," he said; "it hardly seems worth while to wait, do you think?"

The maid appeared much appalled at the idea of their waiting.

"She 'll naturally be later to-night, too, because she 'll know the cats so much better to-day," said Maurice. "No, I don't think we 'll wait."

"What name shall I say?"

Maurice turned to his two companions. "What name shall she say?" he asked.

"Oh, no name," said Rita hastily.

"Really, our names would be of no service," said Maurice. "Nobody could possibly use them except ourselves, you know." So he lifted his hat and turned away, leaving the maid dumb and staring.

"I 'm so disappointed," Leslie said, as they returned along Wolverham Court Road; "that 's twice we 've come here for nothing, and it 's such a way."

"Let 's find another," suggested Maurice. "I 've always understood they were thick in Hammersmith."

"But how can we find one?"

"We 'll ask in the shops."

Behold our little party going pleasantly from florist to baker, and from baker to tobacconist, demanding a fortune-teller. But with small success.

One dubious lady did know of a fortune-teller. "But she's not so very good," she said frankly.

"Oh, we don't mind that," said Maurice, with equal frankness; "all we want to know is, does she tell good fortunes?"

The lady took Maurice most seriously. "One of you might try her," she said, "and if she does n't suit, the others need n't go in. It's five shillings; that's a good bit of money, is n't it?"

Maurice took the address.

"Her door does n't open on the street," said the lady; "it's up two pair. You must go in through the door of No. 6."

"I think it's very thoughtful of her to let us go in through No. 6," said Maurice; "because, even if her door did open on the street, how could we get to it 'way up there."

Leslie thought this most amusing, but the lady seemed to think it half-witted and appeared as relieved when they left her shop as Miss Aubrey's maid had appeared when they left her door.

They hunted long and fruitlessly for No. 6, and

the cold chill winter night descended on them still hunting.

"For goodness' sake, let 's give it up and go and get some tea," said Rita.

"Does the Tube run by here?" Leslie asked.

"Oh, my God, that patent windmill!" said Maurice.

"Do you remember, John?"

"Fifteen thousand pounds," said Miss Coghlan promptly. "Whatever did you let him have the money for. The dog disapproved of the investment from the start."

"Press the bell," said Leslie.

Then they all laughed.

"If we behave in this manner ladies of unblemished reputation like John Phillips will soon cease to have anything to do with us," said Leslie most severely.

"I believe you are quite right there," said Maurice, and just then a taxicab direct from heaven descended on them. They got in at once and left Rita at home first.

"If we had found the fortune-teller in and she had said that you were going to marry me, would you have believed her?" Maurice asked, when he and Leslie were left alone in the cozy corners and were speeding on fast.

"No," said Leslie, "of course not."

"If she had said that you were going to marry Witney, would you have believed her?"

"No. I would n't believe any fortune-teller unless she said that I was going to marry Hugo Guilford."

"My goodness me," said Maurice, "what is the use of going to them at all, then?"

"I don't know," said Leslie quite seriously. "I suppose there really is not any use, but I just love to go to them. I go every chance I get. I'm always expecting to find one that will tell me that I'm going to marry him."

Which explained to Maurice why fortune-tellers thrive.

CHAPTER XVII

LESLIE SAYS GOOD-BY

THE afternoon before she was to depart for Germany, Witney took tea with Leslie, and somehow or other stayed on to dinner. It was very unconventional and delightful, and the best thing about it was that Mrs. Snellgrove was dining with Mrs. Batt.

"It's hard to say which is the more agreeable adjunct to your life, Mrs. Snellgrove or Mrs. Batt, is n't it?" said Witney, who had settled it for himself that he was probably going to marry Leslie, and so always felt pleasantly disposed in her presence. "I declare, I can't say which of the two I like best."

"You've never seen Mrs. Batt, have you?" Leslie asked, in a tone of real curiosity.

"No; what is she like?"

"I don't know, I've never seen her. What should I ever see her for. I'm grateful to her for existing, because she keeps Mrs. Snellgrove happy, but beyond that I never give her a second's thought."

"Why do you have a companion, anyway?" asked Witney. "Companions only exist to be gotten out of the way."

"Oh, but it would never do for me to live alone," said Leslie, much shocked; "it would n't be proper. It would be like Daisy Miller."

"And no American ever desired to be like Daisy Miller, that's certain," laughed Witney.

"She was horrid," said Leslie, with conviction. "I always feel so sorry for that nice man's aunt."

Hugo had been gone so long and been silent for so long that Leslie was beginning to think he could n't pardon the Pinkerton investigation and had thrown her over altogether. Whenever she thought seriously she knew better, but sometimes when she thought seriously she grew very angry and considered that it would serve Hugo right if she married Witney — or Maurice — or any other man. It did n't so much matter what man, so long as it served Hugo right. When Leslie thought that Hugo did n't love her, she felt equal to marrying any man just to prove to him that she did n't love him either. The really odd part of her logical deduction consisted in the fact that when she was with Witney she thought she preferred Maurice, and when she was with Maurice she thought that

she preferred Captain Melton (who had lately come to town), and when she was with Captain Melton she wondered who she might be going to meet at Schloss Morgenlicht. It was all odd, and only illustrated anew how blind Love always is, since so often he cannot pick a winner, even with the winner stuck on the other end of his own arrow.

But Witney felt very sure. There was something about Leslie that made for a great sensation of security among her men friends. It was a peculiar personal attribute, and one most difficult to analyze. Hugo, who shared it with the rest, and who bitterly resented it in the rest, had once in great wrath declared it owing to the way that she looked at them. Leslie had wiped her eyes sadly in the face of the vile accusation and declared that she never did it — never.

"You do, too," Hugo swore angrily, "even to policemen. It's outrageous."

Then they had parted forever for three days and nine hours.

But, whatever she did, it had its effect, even on Maurice, who was also beginning to think that maybe — And as for Captain Melton — he had n't a doubt. It was Witney, however, who felt surest, and so naturally the dinner went merrily forward.

"What crossing do you make to-morrow?" the guest asked, when they arrived at the farther end of the salad.

"I don't know," said Leslie, "we have n't looked it up yet. If I wake up in time I want to cross in the day. But it takes so many rugs to cross in the day. I think night's better; but the state-rooms are so narrow."

"Are you going Flushing or the Hook?"

"I don't know; Rose sees to all that. I want to go to Antwerp, — the Scheldt takes so long to get up that you can sleep till eight. And I think Antwerp's interesting; I like to pick out the descendants of the Spanish soldiers."

"There are some good pictures there, too," said Witney, who was really very cultivated.

"Yes — and it's so near Brussels; I buy all my hats in Brussels."

Witney, not being married to her, laughed at this. Even had he been married to her he might still have laughed, for hats are very cheap in Brussels.

Later they went over by the fire and had coffee. It was very peaceful and pleasant, and it seemed as if things might as well be brought a little forward

now as left hanging fire indefinitely. The visitor was considering how to bring them a little forward when Captain Melton was announced and jarred the whole scheme of life sadly. The two men had never liked one another, and were certainly not rejoiced over this meeting. Leslie did n't know what to do except sit between them and try to agree with both at once. This proved difficult.

Captain Melton thought the German situation grave, and Witney thought it ludicrous; Melton said each time we had been invaded we had been conquered, and Witney said wherever we went we always conquered, and so we had conquered England, too; from this happy set-to they flew to Japan, and one called the Japanese the race of the future, while the other considered them the last gasp of the past. On Russia and the income tax they were equally divided. One thought the king a statesman, and the other thought him a figure-head. One saw the future roseate, and the other pointed out that in a single year trade had fallen off one hundred million pounds. In the midst of it all the door opened and Maurice walked in, and if there was a subject that the two Englishmen could and did agree upon, it was in detesting Maurice. Witney had always resented Maurice's ambassadorial

credentials at Kenelm, and Melton despised American men now in place of women.

All of which did not trouble the sweet-tempered Maurice in the least. He at once pulled a chair up close to Leslie and began to talk to her, thus throwing the other two most emphatically upon themselves. This made Witney so disgusted that he rose almost at once and departed, leaving Melton and the latest arrival to fight it out to a finish. They fought.

It was a second well-bred battle, but the clash of nationalities made the interest keener. No man, however furious, could ever be other than forced to his best with Maurice, who was suave to the manner born. And the captain was a clever fencer, too. Each used his foil without any button on the end. Leslie sat and just gasped this time.

They were so charming to one another. They were so interested in one another. Melton inwardly hoped that Maurice was just out making calls, and Maurice inwardly knew that this was his last call this evening, and that having come latest he would have the right to stay last. That gave him a secret spiritual advantage over the other that he used with great magnanimity.

They talked of the theatre. Melton had been at

the one representation of So-and-so before the Lord Chancellor closed it up. He looked at Maurice triumphantly. But Maurice had been at two of the rehearsals. Maurice opined that if the Lord Chancellor had been at the rehearsals, Captain Melton would never have seen the piece at all. This was indeed drawing blood. Melton grew quite savage, but all he said was "God bless my soul; look at that clock!" Maurice looked at the clock with an impartial air, as if, even had he been Lord Chancellor, he would have thought it only right to let the clock go on running.

They discoursed on the Art Exhibit next, and there, too, the captain found himself among reefs just as he had gotten all sail up. Then they flew at airships, Melton having been out with Santos-Dumont.

"It's curious up there, isn't it?" said Maurice indifferently.

"Yes, until you get used to it," said the captain.

"I'm well accustomed to them," said Maurice. "I'm one of the elect to have been allowed *carte blanche* to that government balloon park they've got just outside of Paris."

Melton seemed again close to losing his temper. Leslie sat pink and miserable. She wished that her

countryman would n't, but did n't know how to stop him. She took off her bracelet and read all that was engraved inside. When Maurice's eyes were on the ground she looked appealingly at the captain, and when the captain's eyes were on the ground she looked appealingly at Maurice. Neither took her speechless hint. Then she tried to put the bracelet on again.

"Shall I fasten it for you?" Maurice asked in a soft, tender tone, as if he and he alone had thoroughly mastered the intricacies of that particular fastening. It was bitterly unfair of him, for he had never laid eyes on it before. Leslie turned pale, and the captain turned green.

"I can do it myself, thank you," she murmured, and Maurice smiled in a superior manner, as if she would have her little joke.

"Well, I must be running along," said the Englishman, jumping up abruptly. Leslie rose then, and Maurice rose, too. She was uneasy, but Maurice was as calm as ever. He went to the tea-table, took up a teacup with a green dragon on it and carefully examined the design. It made him appear in a peculiarly good light, only Leslie knew he could see the whole room in the pier-glass opposite.

She gave her hand to the captain, who shook it gently.

"What time do you go to-morrow," he said, trying to see her without allowing Maurice, who was standing just behind her, to completely spoil the perspective.

"I don't know yet," she said unhappily; "we have n't looked it out yet."

"I'm to have your address, at all events," said the captain, hoping that the young man heard that, "and I may be in Berlin in February."

"I do hope so," she said weakly.

Then he shook her hand again, pressed it hard, and let it go. Then he shook hands with Maurice in a prompt, tart manner, and let his go, too. Then he quitted the room and left them together. •

Leslie went over by the fire, rested her elbow on the chimney-piece and her forehead on her hand.

"Why did n't you send him away an hour ago?" Maurice, back examining the cup again, asked.

"How could I? I never want to offend men. One may want to marry them some day. You were horrid to him, I think."

"Do you think seriously of marrying every man you meet?" he asked, putting down the cup now and coming to her side.

"One can never tell."

Maurice was silent. The clock ticked loudly. "Guess who I'm thinking of?" the man said low.

"I don't know," said Leslie, feeling very sure that he ought to go. She always knew intuitively when men ought to go.

"Won't you ask who?" said the sweet-toned Maurice.

She hesitated. He took her hand and pressed it very nicely and neatly indeed, until finally he pressed an answer out of her. "Who?" she asked softly.

"Mrs. Snellgrove and Mrs. Batt," he replied wickedly.

It was too bad that Maurice never could wholly rise above his sense of the ludicrous. If he really had wanted Leslie, he lost her then and there; for she had a sense of the ludicrous, also.

"Maurice, that was not gentlemanly," she said, and burst out laughing.

In spite of themselves they were forever quoting Kenelm in serious seconds.

He laughed, too, and then, when he saw how heartily she laughed, he felt suddenly slightly hurt. It was the work of but a second for a man to turn Leslie sober, however, and now this one merely flung himself into

a big chair and held out his arms. "As long as you have a companion it's all right, even if she is dining with Mrs. Batt," he proposed; "and if you don't see it as I do, why, be a sister to me. I'm feeling so brotherly to-night."

Leslie turned dreadfully serious at once and looked at him. He looked very inviting, but what the gay Maurice had n't just calculated on was that Hugo stood — as ever — sentinel over her.

"Oh, I can't," she said, the tears starting in spite of herself. "I want to, but I must n't."

"As a mother," then, pleaded Maurice; "or as a young aunt? Please! Come!"

"No," said Leslie miserably. "I'd be sure to kiss you, even if you were n't sure to kiss me. You'd better go, I think." She was very sure of that now.

"As a step-grandmother," suggested Maurice, his humor waxing wilder; "or, if you will have it so, I'll turn off the lights and play you're my real grandmother. You can't think how fond I am of my real grandmother. Come. Do."

She could n't help laughing, he was so droll; but she knew now that he must go and at once. And just then Mrs. Snellgrove was heard saying good-by to Mrs. Batt in the hall below.

"Now you never will know how I feel about my real grandmother," said Maurice, rising with regret. "The way you let your chances like sunbeams pass you by is certainly going to be a shock to you when the well runs dry."

And he kissed her hand most beautifully and departed.

"Oh, Mrs. Snellgrove," Leslie exclaimed, the instant her chaperone came in, "did you remember to ask Rose if she put in my white coat? I've been so worried for fear she'd forgotten it that I've not thought of another thing since I had my tea."

CHAPTER XVIII

LESLIE PARTS WITH MAURICE

It was understood that Leslie hated to be seen off, so naturally it was quite in keeping with Maurice's character to insist on doing so. He arrived just one quarter of an hour before she ought to leave the house, and all that she could do under the circumstances was to cry from the sleeping-room beyond the dressing-room which connected with the sitting-room, "Goodness me," and then he was left alone in aforesaid sitting-room to try and think what was gone out of it — besides Leslie herself.

"I suppose you are all dressed?" he called out, after awhile.

"Oh, yes, long ago," she called back.

He could n't possibly know that she and Rose were engaged in "putting in the last things," Rose having been unexpectedly delayed by an accident — an unexpected "last errand."

"Is Mrs. Snellgrove there?" Maurice called, in further query.

"No, she 's at Mrs. Batt's. It 's Mrs. Batt's birthday," Leslie called back. "It seemed so dreadful to ask them both to sacrifice Mrs. Batt's birthday to me. Mrs. Batt has a birthday only once a year, and you know how frequent I am."

Maurice pondered this for a whole minute, and then, "Can't I come and help," in a very sweet voice that she knew, oh, so well. "I 'm so good at helping." He always forgot that she kept a maid.

"I 'm not sure of that," laughed Leslie.

Maurice knew so little about ladies' sleeping-rooms that he always thought of them as places of strict seclusion. "Do let me help," he cried again, all unwitting that the porter and another man had now entered beyond for the trunks and were locking and strapping the same. "I don't need any help," Leslie (who was putting on her veil) called back.

"A woman always needs help," suggested Maurice, in a tender voice that yet had to be strong enough to sweep through a dressing-room and two pairs of portières.

"Not always," said Leslie, accepting a hat-pin from Rose, who was working hard to remain demure.

"You 'd better prove my worth while you 've the chance."

Then she hurried suddenly in upon him. "Oh, I'm glad to see you. I've had company ever since I woke. Women on the bed, women on the trunks, they all but perched on my tooth-brush and my bath."

Maurice laughed — but not very heartily. Now that she was right before him, it came over him that he was going to miss her awfully! Leslie was one of the most missable women imaginable.

"When do you suppose you'll be coming back?" he asked, holding his gloves disconsolately behind his back and wondering how much he might dare to dare at the very last minute.

"I don't know," said Leslie. "I would n't count on my coming back at all, if I were you. If I meet a nice German I may marry one. I think I could love anything as perfect as they consider a man to be over there."

Maurice sighed.

"Don't do that," said Leslie; "you'll depress the dog."

"The dog's depressed already," said Maurice. "I do wish you'd kiss me good-by."

"Oh, I could n't possibly," said Leslie. "Mrs. Snellgrove is at Mrs. Batt's, and you know very well that I would n't even if she was n't."

"I think that she ought to have stayed home to see you off."

"Why should she? She is n't a bit of use. I'm always only too pleased when she goes out. I think a chaperone is a horrible idea; they are so in the way, and men never like them. I'll be so glad if I ever marry again, so that Mrs. Snellgrove can go and live permanently with Mrs. Batt. It's her dream, and it's getting to be mine too."

"I hope she'll realize it soon," said Maurice. "She can count on me to help her get under way any time."

He thought this rather neat, but his companion did n't seem to hear it. She was buttoning her glove.

"Let me," said Maurice.

"It's done now."

"I'm sure that you'll be exactly like Mrs. Lewes when you're her age," said Maurice vindictively. "You are finding out new little ways to make life trying for your guests every day."

"I don't call you my guest," said Leslie; "the rent for these rooms ran out twenty minutes ago, and you came without being invited, anyway."

"A very unkind speech," said Maurice, and began to put on his own gloves at once.

"I hear the carriage," said Leslie, who, whatever

she might do sometime, had fully decided to never marry Maurice.

All this led to the fact that when once they were in the carriage life became extremely serious, not to say doleful.

"How pretty the park looks!" Maurice said sadly, trying to take her hand and failing.

"You'll remember me to Mrs. Lewes when you meet her, won't you?" said Leslie, wishing he were Witney. (Witney was a gentleman through and through, and although she was fairly sure that he loved her pretty well, still she knew that he would never take her hand.)

"We did have a jolly Christmas, did n't we?" said Maurice, with fresh mournfulness.

"Oh, I'll never forget that awful cold!" said Leslie, her heart thrilling at the recollection.

With that both hands got right into the muff — the old familiar muff; it seemed only natural.

"Next time I shall go to the Man and the Hen," Maurice announced with decision. "You will, too, won't you?"

"That's what Alice and the Boots did," said Leslie. "Kimberly told me they went right straight there."

"I sympathized with Alice and the Boots," said Maurice. "I envied them their cozy corners."

"Of course they must have been cold too," Leslie said simply.

London was almost as sad as Maurice when they got down into the city. "Is n't it dirty?" Leslie said.

"I'm going to miss you so terribly!" said Maurice, sighing. "You'll write, of course?"

"If I have time."

"Won't you make it, for me?" (The tenderness of his voice!)

"Don't be foolish."

They reached the station at last. It was even sadder than the city. It looked as if one half of the inhabitants had just buried the other half and were rushing across the Channel to enjoy their inheritances without letting it show in their faces. The usual mountains of sturdy, well-worn, sole-leather English luggage. The usual intermixing grouping of severe-nosed English ladies and plaid-coated English gentlemen. Leslie had to pay thirteen shillings excess, which troubled the porter very much.

"And now I must put you into your coupé," said the merry Maurice, looking ready to weep. "I do wonder when I'll see you again!"

"Don't take it so much to heart," said Leslie; "if I ever marry we'll have you often for week-ends. I'm sure I hope he'll do a little thing like that for you and me."

This quite stung Maurice. "Oh, I'll be all over it this time to-morrow," he said brightly. "It hurts to-day, but you must n't suppose for a minute that it's anything really serious."

"Oh, I know," said Leslie.

Then he tucked her into the coupé, and a little later the locomotive pulled them far apart.

"Rose," said Leslie, "I'm so glad that you speak German."

"Yes, madame," said Rose.

"We'll have a nice time this time," Leslie said comfortably.

"Yes, madame," said Rose.

CHAPTER XIX

LESLIE AND A REAL SCHLOSS

It is most unfortunate and uncomfortable for those traveling from England to Germany that Germany has not managed to stretch to the ocean. The trip between is very long and tedious, and altogether disagreeable. There is really nothing but the custom-house to break the day, and it is a sad commentary on custom-houses that no traveler, however bored, ever enjoyed getting down and getting a breath of fresh air in that way.

Schloss Morgenlicht not having been thoughtful enough to anticipate the Through-Berlin-Express and locate itself conveniently, Leslie and Rose spent the last of the afternoon wriggling down through a dis-banded kingdom and an old grand-duchy to the end that they might at any rate get to bed where beds were awaiting them.

"You won't forget to find out where to put the coal into my stove, will you?" said the mistress to the

maid, as they waited at a certain bleak junction. "You know in really nice houses they never have the coal put directly into the stove; all that is managed two rooms and a hall away."

"Yes, madame," said the obediently disposed Rose.

"And don't forget looking in everything for spiders. Some man told me that they're everywhere in Germany — and seems to me he mentioned slippers particularly. Don't you go and put anything on me, or give me anything to put on, that's got spiders in it."

"Oh, certainly not," said Rose, much shocked at the idea.

"I do wonder how low they wear dresses in schlosses," Leslie reflected; "not that it matters, for I've frocks all heights."

It was about six o'clock when they finally reached Abendstadt, the nearest railway connection for their destination. The Graf was on the station platform, with a footman. After he had kissed Leslie's hand, he explained that his wife would have come too, only that the morning mail had rather upset her.

"Oh, I hope nothing has happened," said Leslie anxiously.

"No, nothing has happened, but something is going to happen," said the Graf, and then he led her to the

carriage. The drive that followed was absolutely charming. First the cozy, little, red-roofed village, and then the Tannenwald Weg of Rittergut Morgenlicht. Two miles straight of cut forest with occasional wide sweeps of clear snow, pheasants whirring across the open, and deer peeping forth and then leaping lightly away as the carriage approached.

"Is that the schloss?" Leslie asked, as they emerged from the forest and saw on a hill to the right a grand old donjon glowering down at them. It had two round towers with pointed tops, and another, bigger tower behind, and was most romantic looking.

"No," said the Graf, "that is Schloss Liebesthal. You'll meet him to-morrow at dinner."

Leslie was much struck at the idea of having a castle to dinner. "Is he interesting?" she queried.

"He's the most disagreeable man with the best manners you ever met," said the Graf; "don't trust him, whatever you do. Marry him, if you like, but never believe a word he says. Oh, he's an awful brute! I know him well; he's our nearest neighbor."

Leslie promised not to place the slightest confidence in Schloss Liebesthal, and, as they were now entering another wood, he was soon lost to view.

"My wife will be so glad to see you," said the

Graf presently: "you'll divert her mind. She is upset."

"I'm so sorry," Leslie said. "I suppose I may n't ask you what is the trouble?"

"I could n't do it justice," said the Graf; "all I can say is, she brought it on herself. Remember that."

Leslie promised to remember.

"It'll be rather pleasant for you here just now," the Graf went on soon. "You see, Fürst Wartenstein is having a *Jagd* party at Steinwarten, and we know them all. You'll like Wartenstein; his mother was a Von Kracht and her mother was — well, I don't remember just now what she was, but I believe Goethe wanted to marry her, or else she went to England with George I; but everybody knows all about her, so don't show your ignorance by asking any questions."

Leslie promised not to ask any questions; she was more than a little grateful to the count for posting her up so generously.

"We are nearly there," he said, as they rounded a slight hill. "You want to look at that monument; it was put up to the memory of Varus by my great-grandfather. He wrote a little book about Varus, and he put up that monument to him, and named my grandfather after him."

"I thought the Germans were all so proud of — of the man who fought Varus," said Leslie.

"They are, generally, but my great-grandfather abhorred war. It must have been a kind of presentiment of his, for he was shot by Napoleon."

"Oh, dear," said Leslie, "how sad!"

"I don't know," said the Graf; "he was an awful beast. There, that's the castle."

Leslie looked out quickly.

Schloss Morgenlicht stood in a large open space in the middle of its own park. It was a perfectly tremendous building, with tiers on tiers of windows, and towers on battlements, with more battlements on top of the towers. Around the back were grouped long ranges of stone buildings, and the remains of a moat were visible here and there. The effect of the whole *entourage* was imposing in the extreme. Stone lions guarded the main entrance, and stone knights guarded the lions.

The carriage stopped before the steps, and a footman came running out and down to open the door. The Graf and Leslie got out. They went up the steps and into a large hall, where a grand, old, oak staircase wound solemnly around, and antlers and banners hung all about.

"We will go to my wife at once," said the Graf, and led the way on up the staircase. Leslie felt an altogether different sensation from that which had ushered her in upon Mrs. Lewes. She was genuinely impressed now. There 's such a wide space between new position and old.

Half-way up the solemn slope they met the Gräfin, coming down to meet and welcome her friend. She was a fair, sweet, blonde woman and undeniably pleased to see Leslie.

"This is so kind of you," she said, kissing her warmly on both cheeks, quite as if, in accepting her invitation, Leslie had conferred some unwonted honor upon her.

"But I was delighted to come," said Leslie; "besides wanting to visit with you, I think that it will be such fun living in an old, old castle." She smiled most heartily.

"As to the fun of living in an old, old castle, I don't know," said the Gräfin, leading the way into a warm and sunny sitting-room, looking out over the park. "The roof is forever to be mended, and the whole thing has to be built over every two hundred years." She spoke as if a castle owner hardly had time to turn around before he had to begin repairing his little nest.

"Have you had tea?" asked the Graf, planting himself before the open fire and regarding the guest pleasantly.

"Oh, yes, long ago," said Leslie.

"Then you must sit here and get warm while I tell you the news," said the Gräfin. "Such shocking news," she added, smiling pleasantly.

"Oh, horrible!" said the Graf, "we're quite used up."

"Dear me," said Leslie, pulling off her gloves and piling her wraps into the arms of one of the footmen, who seemed to appear automatically whenever desired. "Your husband did n't make me think that it was as bad as that."

"It's nothing to worry you," said the Gräfin; "it only worries us. It's a wedding."

"A wedding!" said Leslie, much startled.

The Gräfin nodded. "Our niece," she said. "You see, the poor girl has no mother, and she has written and asked if she can be married here. What could we say?"

"*Donnerwetter*, we could have said no," said the Graf; "that's what I should have said. But the difficulty was that we'd always promised her her wedding. You see!"

"You see that placed us where we could n't very well get out of it," said the Gräfin; "now, could we?"

"We could have gone to Wiesbaden," said the Graf.

"Dear George," said his wife, "you know that you would not have done that any more than I would." Then she turned to Leslie. "It was really too terrible to think of at first. I nearly went mad. We did not know that she was even betrothed. I had been to see my cousin and I drove home quite happy and came in, and there sat my *Mann* with the letter. As soon as I saw him I cried, '*Um Gottes willen*, George, what is it?' and all he said was, 'Read.' I was so frightened I could hardly cross the room. I said, 'Oh, tell me, is it our boy?' but all he said was, 'Read!' Then I read — and I sank down on that seat over there — and what a terrible evening we spent!"

"Horrible," said the Graf, with feeling; "horrible!"

"But when is it to be?" asked Leslie.

"Next week," said the Graf; "next week! In this snow! This whole schloss to heat!"

"Twenty people for the night, my dear," said the Gräfin; "twenty people for the night, and every one with a valet or a *femme de chambre*, and the old prince with his physician, and the old duchess with her companion. *Ach, Gott!*"

"Perhaps I'd better go on to-morrow," said Leslie, much appalled at the impending calamity.

"No, no, my dear, you can't do that. We're entertaining for you. We've got a great dinner to-morrow, and the Freifrau von Diebeshaufen has asked you there Thursday. And, besides, this is all a secret; no one knows except just our family."

"No one must know," said the Graf; "it's a very great secret."

"We only tell you so that you will understand," said the Gräfin; "you must say nothing."

Leslie promised to say nothing.

"You see, it's like this," said the Graf: "they live in Pomerania, and the marriage can't be there because then the old prince and the old duchess could n't be present. And they want to be present."

"You see, the old duchess is her great-aunt," said the Gräfin, "not on the side of the Von dem Blumen, but because Ragnhild's mother was a Von Glockchen. As for the old prince, of course that's through the Beusts. I hope I make it clear?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Leslie.

"His mother was a Von Knockenbaun," put in the Graf; "you forgot that, *Liebste*."

"It's all so dreadful," said the Gräfin. "Only

fancy, we must have this whole thing done in flowers from top to bottom, and a carpet from here to the church. Heaven only knows where I can borrow that carpet."

"You 'll be sorry you sold all those old beds out of the garret now," observed the Graf.

"I 'll be sorrier I sold those old suits of yours," answered his wife sadly; "they 'd have done for extra footmen. But the garret was so full of old stuff. It had n't been thoroughly cleared out since Wallenstein sacked the place."

"You must see the Wallenstein Saal," said the Graf. "He slept there the night after his arrival."

"I do wonder how we 'll ever make the old duchess comfortable," sighed the Gräfin; "she 's always so uncomfortable. I wish she 'd refuse to come."

"Think of sleeping twenty people!" said Leslie, with her perpetual American wonder.

"Oh, we take care of seventy-five people in the summer often and often quite easily," said the Gräfin; "but the difficulty at this time of year is heating the rooms. We 'll have to have one man to do nothing but tend the fires. Just go from hall to hall and put on coals, you know."

Leslie looked sympathetic.

"It's the strange servants that are the worst," said the Graf; "they make all the trouble."

"*Selbstverständlich*," said his wife, with deep meaning, "and they never help one bit."

"Oh, I'm so sorry for you!" Leslie exclaimed.

"No, no," said the Gräfin, "you must n't feel that way, for we shall manage very well; we always do. And I don't mean to spoil your visit by talking of our little personal troubles, anyway. Tell us all about England, and whether you have lost your heart to an Englishman or not."

"No, I have n't," said Leslie, shaking her head.

"That's so nice," said the Gräfin; "perhaps you'll marry a German and live in this country. Don't you think that she would make a good German hausfrau?" she asked the Graf, smiling.

"I don't know," said the Graf, a little dubiously. "She would n't be able to run around the world as she does now if she were to marry a German, you know."

"I should n't want to run around as I do now," said Leslie; "if I had a nice schloss I should want to stay in it."

"Oh, my dear, you don't know what you're talking about," said the Gräfin, with a sad intonation.

"There's the whole chimney in the chapel falling in. The chapel was done before the Hundred Years War, and when that end was blown up it stood, so they just rebuilt the rest around it, and now it's all crumbling to bits."

"It'll fall in on the wine-cellar some day soon," said the Graf cheerfully.

"Never mind," said Leslie resolutely, "I should like even a caving-in schloss, even if it caved in right on top of me."

"That would be likely enough to happen," said the Gräfin pleasantly. "Now I must take you to your room and let you get a bit of rest before supper. We are old-fashioned and have supper at night."

Thereupon Leslie was led away to her own quarters.

CHAPTER XX

LESLIE AND A LIVE HUSSAR

THE footman was spreading the tea-table in the great bow-window, and the family were all gathered about it. The family were the Graf, the Gräfin, and Leslie.

Just then there was the sound of hoofs below, and the Graf looked out of the window and exclaimed, "Ah, there 's Von Dienstag! Just in time for tea."

Baron von Dienstag was an officer of the Hussars, and had ridden from heaven knows where on horse-back with a Hussar private to hold his horse. Booted and spurred, he was in upon them in a minute, his face all abeam with a welcome reflected from that of his friends. He was presented to Leslie and gave her a beautiful silver-braided bow. •

They all drew up around the tea-table at once, and the "little Dienstag," as the six-feet-two of Hussar pleasantly dubbed himself, sat next to the guest.

"But you must n't make love to her," said the

Gräfin, "because she wants a schloss and you have no schloss."

"But I can buy a schloss," expostulated the Hussar, as if no such trifle as a schloss present or absent should ever prevent his making love. "You are not going to break me of any bad habits, you know."

"Nothing will ever break you of any bad habits, I fancy," said the Graf.

At this the little Dienstag drew one corner of his mouth into a meaning smile and looked at Leslie.

"Have you heard about what's to happen to us next week?" asked the Gräfin.

"Yes, I had a letter from Ludwig. So it's to be here."

"You must n't tell any one; it's a secret, you know," said the Gräfin.

"Oh, I won't tell any one. I can keep a secret. I'm keeping all my own."

"Yes, but think of having to heat this castle," said the Graf earnestly. "Twenty people coming."

"Why don't you get Liebesthal to put up some of the men?"

"Liebesthal!" said the Gräfin with scorn. "Liebesthal would n't stable a cat for a friend; you know that."

"Oh, yes, I know that," said the Hussar, who was clearly of a nature that fell in easily with the views of his friends.

"If I were a cat, I would n't put up with Liebes-thal," said the Graf. "Such a brute! We were shooting together all day Monday, — such a shot, — and then he came home with me to dinner."

"And found fault with the dinner," said the Gräfin. "God pity his wife; that's all I can say."

"He'll never have a wife," said Von Dienstag, eating, drinking, and talking without ever taking his eyes off Leslie. "He does n't mean to marry. He let's other men do the marrying, and then he makes love to their wives."

"Like yourself?" suggested the Graf. At that the little Dienstag smiled his curious smile again.

"No, but really this wedding is no easy trick," said the Graf. "You know the old prince is coming."

"Ludwig wrote me both the old princes were coming," said the Hussar. "Have n't they told you?"

"*Donnerwetter*, no!" said the Graf, looking quite sober. "Are you sure? That would mean three more rooms?" he said to his wife.

"Five," said Dienstag; "Lili will come, too."

"Not if the Mittwochs are here," said the Gräfin; "you forgot the Freitag story."

"Her mother was a Von Kleberich," said the Graf. "Dear me, I hope General von Kleberich won't hear of our having the prince here."

"His mother was a Sonnabend, you see," said the Gräfin to Leslie. "One has to be so careful about that kind of thing with us."

"And I heard that Weissenthurm was coming, too," said the Hussar.

"Oh, no!" cried the Gräfin. "Whoever told you that?"

"I must n't tell, because it is a lady."

"We'll have to heat the west wing, then."

"I don't believe Weissenthurm would come here," said the Graf. "You know why not?"

"He's never minded that. Her mother was a Hohenthal, you know," said Dienstag; "that altered it all."

"You see Graf Weissenthurm is Ragnhild's uncle," explained the Gräfin to Leslie, "not on our side, of course; her grandmother was a Weissenthurm."

"But his mother was a Wartegg," interpreted the count; "that's how they come to own Schwarzhut."

"But Schwarzhut came through the Sussebieenes,

the father's mother, of course," said the Gräfin. "I do hope it's all plain to you?" she added to Leslie.

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Leslie, much bewildered, but smiling.

"Are you going to drive over alone to-night, or are you going to bring the Von Mittwochs?" asked the Gräfin of the baron now.

"I'm not coming with them," said Dienstag with much firmness; "I'm coming alone."

"Can't you bring me some pillows, then?" asked the Gräfin. "I shall want ever so many extra pillows. Bring me over twelve, if you can."

"Well, if I can remember to have them put in the carriage," said the Hussar obligingly; "but don't count on them."

"If both the princes come, I shall want every pillow and blanket you've got," said the Gräfin. "Do have them gotten ready; that's a good soul."

"I will," said the Hussar. "I'll keep Witzleben over night, too, if you like."

"Witzleben! Is Witzleben coming?" cried the Graf and the Gräfin together.

"Why, of course; did n't you know that?"

"No; who told you?"

"He wrote me. Of course he'd be coming. His

father's Baron Stein's uncle. He'd be at the wedding if there was any one at all there."

"My goodness me!" said the Gräfin in despair. "If Witzleben is coming, the whole family in that direction must be coming."

"You see Witzleben's mother was an Abend," said the Graf. Leslie rose suddenly and fled the room.

CHAPTER XXI

LESLIE DINES

LESLIE, dressing for dinner, soon discovered by the resonance that shook the walls that her room was situated in the clock-tower. It was a huge apartment, with an artful arrangement of rod and drapery confining one corner to the purposes of a dressing-room. She could look out of one window over the park, and she could look out of another down into a great court, stone-paved, and where she later discovered that some one was always drawing water. There were four closets buried in her walls, and a stone staircase winding up to darkness just to the left of the chimney. It was a delightful room, pleasantly feudal and deliciously warm.

"Not much like Kenelm," she reflected.

Rose had everything laid out, and the labor of a toilette was soon finished. Then she threw an opera-wrap around her shoulders and went with the maid through several unheated halls to that particular

quarter of the castle where the evening's entertainment was to be held. Arrived at her destination, Rose received the opera-wrap back to carry upstairs, and her mistress entered a long suite of huge, irregularly shaped rooms, brilliantly lighted, in the end one of which the Graf, with all his orders on, was looking over the pages of his Hunt Book. The Graf was greatly pleased to see Leslie down so promptly, and at once showed her to a chair beside his and exhibited the written proof of how many deer, hare, rabbits, and pheasants he had killed each year since he began to shoot a gun. She was much interested; indeed, she was so much interested that when they finished the Hunt Book he took her through several more brilliantly lighted rooms to where he had a small private menagerie of stuffed animals, the boxes piled one on another as if the circus were getting ready to move on. Here he took the greatest possible pleasure in pointing out which were weasels and which were wild-cats, explaining naïvely the meanwhile that all the live animals had been infinitely bigger than their skins. This Germanized version of the size of the fisher's fish delighted her very soul. She did wish that Hugo had been by to hear it, for Hugo had a strong sense of humor.

When they had looked long and thoroughly upon all the well-preserved game they came back to the established rendezvous and found the Gräfin seated by the fire. It was five minutes before the hour set for people to come, and a stillness like death reigned over Morgenlicht. The Gräfin seemed slightly depressed; it was evidently very difficult to rise above the opening of the west wing.

"I do hope that I shall not make any social blunders to-night," said Leslie. "The hardest thing about going from country to country is the mastering of the etiquette."

"Oh, you need n't trouble about that," said the Gräfin kindly. "Only don't say '*Frau Baronin*'; say '*Gnädige Frau*,' or else say nothing at all."

"I thought only servants or people asking if one was at home said '*Gnädige Frau*,'" said Leslie.

"Say nothing at all, that's simplest," said the Graf.

"Dear *Mann*," said his wife, "did you telephone about the opening of the west wing to-morrow?"

"Yes, they will come."

The Gräfin sighed heavily. "And never courtesy except to a princess," she said, turning to Leslie; "and there'll be no princess here to-night, so you

won't courtesy at all. And remember not to trust Liebesthal, or tell him anything you don't want known. He's such a tattletale, it makes me quite ill to think that he knows our secret."

"And don't think he's in love with you if he says so," said the Graf, "because he won't be."

"It's just that he likes to say so to see if you'll believe it," explained the Gräfin; "Von Dienstag is just the same."

"They all are," said the Graf.

Then a thunderous sound of carriages burst out suddenly below.

"Oh, who am I to sit by?" Leslie exclaimed suddenly.

"I've given you Liebesthal himself," said the Gräfin, "because if you could manage to marry him that castle is a dream."

"There are Roman bricks in the foundation work," said the Graf rising; "and he's rich, too," he added.

"And the sweetest disposition," said the Gräfin, also rising; "he would n't hurt a fly. And he's off shooting most of the time, so he'd be out of your way; and then there's all the mother's property for the oldest boy."

"His mother was a Von Pfeffer um Salz," inter-





polated the Graf. He and his wife were now moving towards the door.

"And her mother was a born Freiin Brötchen," said the Gräfin. "Oh, there's no lack of blood in Liebesthal."

"Only you never can trust him," said the Graf, over his shoulder. "You must n't think if he asks you to marry him, not to-night but any time, that he means it, you know."

"Oh, dear no," said the Gräfin; "she never would be so foolish as that."

The dinner-party burst in upon them just then, and between silver braid and top-boots with spurs it was such a brilliant sight from the first minute that Leslie felt herself taken into the heart of a comic opera and absolutely dazzled out of her senses. She never had been so close to so many Hussars at once in all her life. They were so very charming, too, and as pleasant to talk to as they were beautiful to look at. One lived in a monocle and they all had castles and mothers and huge estates in Pomerania or Silesia. The ladies present looked rather faded in comparison. Most of them resembled old and conscientiously done family portraits, and there were two or three young girls who had n't had their portraits done yet and so

had n't quite settled what to look like. Graf Liebesthal proved to be an eagleish gentleman with a gorgeous moustache and a neat blue band fitting just beneath his collar, to which was hung a huge order. Leslie admired him very much, but their conversation was painfully perfunctory at table, the Gräfin having given her dreaded neighbor on his other side a lady in whom he was apparently deeply interested, — a fact which his legitimate lady soon found out. There was nothing left for her to do but to imitate the happy Graf and take what did n't belong to her, too, for Leslie was never one of those who go quietly and cheerfully manless. The man on her other side looked to be not so bad, and after a second searching glance at him she took up his name card and introduced him properly to herself.

"Ah, you're an Oberregierungsrat, I see," she said, as a safe opening play. "Do tell me what you do?"

"I work," said the Oberregierungsrat with an alacrity which proved that he did n't care a bit about the lady they had given him. "I work from nine to ten daily."

"From nine to ten! What a nice, easy post," said Leslie; "and what do you do in the afternoon?"

"You did n't understand," said the O——srat. "I said that I worked from nine to ten hours daily."

"Oh, dear," said Leslie; "really? But do tell me, as long as you're of so obliging a disposition, what is an assessor and what does he do? I've always been so curious about what an assessor might be. I've never been able to find out."

"He works for an Oberregierungsrat," said the O——srat; "the assessor writes, and then I read it over and sign it." He took a glass of wine.

"How obliging of you," said Leslie, referring, of course, to his treatment of the assessor.

She had to pause then and lean out of the way while a footman told the O——srat what he was going to pour into another of his glasses and then poured it in.

"And a *Geheimrat*," she said when she was again perpendicular, "what does he do?"

The O——srat was just about to drink out of his last-filled glass. "A *Geheimrat* does n't do anything," he said; "he's done doing." And then he drank.

Leslie was greatly amused. She did n't mind a bit getting out of the way every other minute for the filling or refilling of his glasses. In the end they became such fast friends that the Graf Liebesthal's behavior in appropriating the wrong lady upset the whole ar-

rangement of the table, and a very inoffensive gentleman and a lady who was making a souvenir collection of switches, as her hair traveled down the vale of life's changes, were swamped high and dry.

The general tone of the conversation was animated but incomprehensible to the American, as it went forward very rapidly and all at the same time.

The wedding-to-be was the subject that came uppermost oftenest in the *mêlée*. From time to time Leslie could just catch the words: "It's all a secret," and "His mother was a Von —" but as a general rule she caught nothing.

When dinner was over they walked through a chain of drawing-rooms to two or three where coffee, liqueurs, and cigarettes were served. Leslie sat down on a low divan and drew a long breath; she felt quite exhausted from eating.

The little Dienstag came up and sat down beside her, his booted and spurred legs extending far forward. She did wonder what he'd have looked like if his hair had been a quarter of an inch long; there seems to be a general spite against numbering any hairs at all on one's head just now among German men.

"Do you shave your head, too, every evening?" she inquired; "what makes you do it?"

"But I don't," said the Hussar gravely; he looked at his shining boots for a long three seconds and then said: "Don't ask me any more questions, please. I have n't had too much to drink, but I cannot answer difficult questions just now."

Leslie looked sharply at him. He continued to look at his boots. They were beautiful boots.

"Do you wear them to balls?" she asked.

Dienstag examined them minutely in turn. "Always," he said briefly, after a while.

"I should think that you'd catch the spurs in ladies' dresses."

He raised his head at that and looked at her so long and steadily that she was almost disconcerted. "I do," he said finally.

"Must you wear them?" she asked.

He waited so long that time that she really thought that he was not going to answer at all, and then he said, "I must."

"Does n't all that silver braid tarnish very easily?" she said then, beginning to fear that he was — that he was —

He looked at all of his silver braid that lay within easy range. "It does," he said.

"Oh, dear," she exclaimed, now quite positive that

he was — that he was — “I think that you ’d better get some coffee or go out and walk about a bit.”

He looked at her again. “You think I ’ve had too much to drink,” he said with a weary, misjudged air, “and I have.”

Leslie wanted to laugh at the finale. “Do go and get some coffee,” she urged.

He paid no attention whatever.

“It would help your head,” she suggested.

He felt around until he touched his forehead and then passed his hand wearily across it.

“I speak English,” he said, with a thoughtful air.

“Do you, indeed?” she replied.

“Yes. ‘Kiss me quick.’”

She started up, but stopped short on discovering that he had his foot on her dress.

“It ’s the name of one of my horses,” he said; “it ’s all the English I know.”

She sat quiet now. She was almost hysterical.

“Do try coffee,” she urged presently, in a faint voice.

He rose and stood looking down on her.

“Do get outdoors,” she pleaded then, looking up at him.

“This is nothing,” he said, smiling in kindly reassur-

ance; "when I really have too much, four men can't hold me. It takes the regiment to get me to bed."

He walked away, and Liebesthal, who was human enough and masculine enough to feel really attracted to her now that he had n't the duty of entertaining her assigned to him, came and took his place at once.

"The schloss will look very differently a week from now," he said, smiling kindly.

"Yes?" she answered interrogatively; "the wedding?"

"No, the wedding will be over. All will be quiet."

"But the wedding is to be a week from to-night."

"They think so," said Liebesthal, "but it's going to be on Monday. Don't tell them; it's a secret."

"A secret!" she repeated. "But they ought to know that secret, don't you think?"

"I don't know why."

"But it's to be in their house."

"Oh, I see what you mean now," said the Graf, "you think they ought to know because they're going to have the wedding."

"Certainly."

"I'll tell you another secret. Fürst Stettin is coming."

"Who is he?" Leslie asked.

"He's the head of the family, only he's the other branch. They separated in the fifteenth century. Of course, it's not a very close connection. His mother was a Von Siege und Feige. You've heard of her, of course?"

"No," said Leslie.

"Dear me! Well, I'm sorry I can't tell you the story."

She looked at him, his blue throat-band, his cross, and his monocle. "You're such a strange man," she said.

"Oh, I'm a very strange man," said Liebesthal, tremendously flattered; "and you're a strange woman. It's a pleasant feeling, don't you think?"

They talked then of many things, — of cabs, of ships, of sealing-wax, and whether pigs have wings. She was told that Morgenlicht was first a robber-castle, then a Benedictine monastery, and then a residence.

"And your schloss?" she asked.

"You must come and see it," he invited her. She accepted the invitation with pleasure. She did not find him any of the things which she had been warned against. She liked him very much indeed.

Soon after the clock in the tower pounded eleven,

and they all went, all except Dienstag, who remained behind and broke first a wine-glass and then a chair-arm in trying to adjust himself to circumstances. Finally he got settled comfortably in a deep seat, and they sat with him until twelve, when the Graf suggested his sleeping there.

"Something must have happened to your carriage," said the very sleepy Gräfin.

"I expect that I did n't tell it to come back," said the Hussar. "I was tired, I 've been out with the recruits all day; I did n't want to take that long drive." He closed his eyes as he spoke. "Not that I 'm sleepy," he explained, with every appearance of lying.

It was proposed to put him in the room ready for the bridegroom. That tried the Gräfin very much indeed.

"I think he ought to have gone home," she said, when their guest had departed in charge of a footman.

"He never goes home," said the Graf. "You remember that his mother was a Von —"

Leslie heard no more, as she was herself on the way to Sleepy-land. Rose tumbled her into bed in short order.

CHAPTER XXII

LESLIE CHANGES HER PLANS

THE morning after the dinner-party the Gräfin put on a fur-lined coat and took Leslie over the schloss. When they returned from their tour it was almost luncheon time, and they found the Graf in a state of collapse. Their friend and neighbor of the sweet but untrustworthy disposition had been paying him a visit, and the morning mail had contained advices that not only the old princess was coming, but the reigning prince as well.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the Gräfin at this. "Oh! Oh!" She sounded exactly as if she were having a tooth drawn.

"You can think what it was to talk to Liebesthal with that in my pocket!" said the Graf, taking out the letter and showing it to Leslie; "and he stayed so! Heavens knows what he stayed so for. He never makes long calls."

"This means having the chimney opened in the

Saint Elizabeth Saal, dear George," said the Gräfin, most miserably. "We shall have to give the prince that room."

"Oh, no!" the Graf exclaimed with heaviest emphasis.

"Yes, we must. And we can give his gentlemen the little room back of the dressing-room — the room Saint Elizabeth's husband had. We must have that stove repaired, too."

"We'll have to borrow Liebesthal's coachmen and both carriages," said the Graf. "I told him so this morning. That was what sent him home finally. I believe he would have stayed to luncheon otherwise."

"I hope you told him about the silver and glass I want," said the Gräfin. "If he were half-way decent he'd let me have his rugs, or he'd take Witzleben there. He ought to take him; his mother was a Von Schonstein."

"He said he'd have his housekeeper pack up the things, if you'd make a list."

"I'll make the list," said the Gräfin. "Dear, dear, what it must be to have a good neighbor!" She sighed and frowned. "What other mail was there?" she asked.

"A letter from Freifrau Marie: she wants to bring her son."

"Oh, *mein Gott!*" cried the Gräfin, "she can't!"

"No, of course not," said the Graf; "the very idea!"

Just then the door opened, and a footman announced Baron Dienstag. The baron followed close on the announcement and apparently had slept to good purpose.

"Are you going now?" the Graf asked him.

"No, I'm not going now. I want lunch." He took the Gräfin's hand.

"What do you think?" the Gräfin exclaimed, while she was getting her hand kissed, "Marie wants to bring her son! Did you ever?"

Dienstag, who was kissing Leslie's hand by this time, gave such a start that she jumped too. "*Ach, nein!*" he cried.

"And the prince has written that he will come; it's his cousin, you know."

Every one fell into chairs as if successive skies kept crashing from above.

"My *Bursche* has just brought over my mail," said the Hussar. "I had a letter from General Hausmeister, he's coming."

There was another sensation!

"Well, he won't stay in this house!" said the Graf angrily. "You can write and tell him that."

"Yes, do us that kindness," said the Gräfin eagerly. "Tell him to stay with you — or Liebesthal."

"The very idea of his coming!" said the Graf, in greatest disgust. "His mother was a Von Köchin."

"And her mother was a Von Briefträger," said the Gräfin. "Why, they were nobody before the Thirty Years' War."

"They're nobody now," said the Graf.

"And Fritz is coming," said Dienstag; "I had a letter from him too."

Fresh electric shocks!

"Fritz! Why, how can he? That means —"

Leslie could n't at all understand the cause of this new emotion.

"Oh, no!" cried the Gräfin; "oh, no!"

"Yes," said the Hussar with gentle force; "yes!"

"The Kaiser's cousin!" exclaimed the Gräfin to Leslie. "If Fritz is coming, it means the Kaiser's cousin. And the Kaiser's cousin means un-nailing the Friedrich des Grossen Saal!"

There was a stupefied pause over this outlook.

"Oh, it's an outrage," said the Graf at last, — "an outrage; the Kaiser himself will be coming next!"

"Yes, you ought not to mind anything if that does n't happen," said Dienstag.

Leslie felt most helpless and in the way.

They had lunch soon, with sugar in the soup, and after lunch she and the Gräfin went to drive.

"Do you know," said the guest to the hostess, "I want to go. You have your hands full, and I can come and visit here any other time. I want to go now."

"Yes, but you can't," said the unhappy relative and friend so much unwelcome nobility; "you can't go to Berlin alone."

"No," said Leslie, "I can't go to Berlin, but what I should like would be to pass three or four days in some quiet place resting. Don't you know of any nice sleepy little town between here and Berlin?"

The Gräfin considered. "I know the very place," she exclaimed, all of a sudden. "You could go to dear Dr. Bettschneider in Kopfdorf. I was there *en pension* when I was a girl, and what a place it is for resting!"

"Is it on the way to Berlin?" Leslie asked.

"On the main line."

"Oh, how nice! And they take boarders?"

"They take every one. It's ideal. You'd be very

happy. Everybody who is anybody has been there. The Duchess of Dutton and the Comte de Romppte and every one else. It's like living in a story."

Leslie did not stop to consider whether or not the Gräfin's desire to be rid of her colored these reminiscences rose-color.

"You see all my Berlin dates are settled," she said, "and I don't want to get there before time. The Bettscheiders of Kopfdorf sound to me like the very thing."

"Oh, they are the very thing," said the Gräfin with decision. "I'll write by to-night's post and tell them to telegraph so you can go to-morrow at four o'clock."

Leslie gave a slight gasp, but accepted her prompt fate.

When they got back Liebesthal had been there again, but no one was home this time.

"Well, bless my soul," said the Gräfin, "whatever does he mean by coming twice in one day. He never came twice in one week before."

The Graf looked very blank indeed. "Did Graf Liebesthal say what he wanted, Gustav?" he asked the footman who had just entered with a telegram.

"No, Herr Graf, the Herr Graf asked for the Herr

Graf, and when I said that the Herr Graf was out, the Herr Graf went on."

"Very odd," said the Gräfin. "But open the telegram, George, dear. I feel sure that it is bad news."

It proved to be the communicating of the fact that the marriage would take place sooner than the first date.

"Well, that is better than if the Kaiser's cousin was coming," said the Gräfin, looking mournfully out over her husband's ancestral acres.

"She is going to-morrow," said the Gräfin next, referring to Leslie.

"Going to-morrow!" said the Graf. He evidently tried to sound distressed.

"Yes; to Kopfdorf."

"To Kopfdorf!"

"Yes."

"To the Bettschneiders?"

"Yes."

The Graf appeared astonished.

"But you 'll never be able to take your maid there," said the Gräfin with sudden afterthought; "they 'd never allow that."

"I 'll leave you Rose to help here, if you like?" Leslie suggested readily.

"Oh, that would be too delightful!" said the Gräfin; "Rose is so good."

"How long is she going to stay there?" inquired the Graf, referring to the mistress, not the maid.

"As long as she was going to stay here," said the Gräfin; "it's so kind of her to go, I think."

They had coffee and tea and chocolate later, only nobody took coffee or chocolate.

"We're very English," said the Gräfin, "we always take tea. Dear me, to think of that fellow's staying all night and using the one room that I had gotten in order."

"Tell me about Kopfdorf?" pleaded Leslie.

"It's delightfully old and crooked," said the Graf.

"Medieval," said his wife. "Oh, I wish Stettin was n't coming. You'll have all the German ways you like at Kopfdorf."

"Kopfdorf is very German," said the Graf; "the Wall-Anlage is nice, though; you'll enjoy going back and forth over the wall."

"Going back and forth over the wall!" Leslie exclaimed.

"It's a promenade," said the Gräfin; "you'll love the dear old town. Every one who goes there is always loving the dear old town. It's so dear and so old."

I wonder if we can get the chimney to draw in the Saint Elizabeth room! "It would n't when Napoleon was here, you know."

"You won't have but a *Steppdecke*, you know," said the Graf; "you 'll have old *deutsche Sitte* now for sure."

"Dear George," said his wife, "every one is always writing back how happy they have been there."

"I 'm only sorry that I shan't be there but four or five days," said Leslie.

"You 'll like the dear old doctor; he never talks and he 's blind, but he 's such a love," went on the Gräfin absent-mindedly.

"How can he treat people?" wondered Leslie.

"Oh, he does n't have patients; he 's a doctor of philosophy," said the Graf. "He got his degree before the Franco-Prussian War."

"Such a romantic house!" said the Gräfin. "It 's really idyllic. And they have a *Stütze*."

"What 's a *Stütze*?" said Leslie, conscious of feeling about in her German vocabulary for a racing-stable and yet certain it could n't be that.

"She cooks and sits with the family," said the Gräfin. "You must n't ever speak to her, because the doctor does n't know they 've got her. He won't

know they've got you, either. He hates having strangers about, so they never have told him that they keep a *pension*. Only fancy, all these years and he's never known it."

"Mercy!" cried Leslie, "won't he know I'm there!"

"Certainly not."

Leslie looked distressed.

"But you'll like them," said the Gräfin reassuringly.

"It will be all so new to you. You'll think of me while you wander peacefully about Kopfdorf, won't you?"

Leslie promised.

"Oh, yes, it will all be new to you," said the Graf.

CHAPTER XXIII

LESLIE GOES TO KOPFDORF

LESLIE and one small trunk set forth for Kopfdorf the next morning at eleven. She had n't expected to go until four, but the opening of the Kaiser Friedrich Saal brought all the plaster in her room down, so she hastened her departure. The Graf saw her off. They had a very pleasant drive to the station.

"On my way home I must stop and see Liebesthal. I can't think what can be the matter to bring him over so often. He was there again this morning."

Leslie looked earnestly out at the Tannenwald through which they were passing, considered the nice blue throat-band and the beautiful Maltese cross, and — and continued to look at the trees.

The Graf installed her safely in her coupé and stood by the door till the train went. One resplendent officer passed and saluted and the Graf said afterwards: "Well, you are fortunate not to have met him or he would have spoiled your whole journey."

He's a terrible bore; his mother was a Von Sinnlos." Leslie looked after the beautiful creature and felt, with a sigh, that men never would learn any sense.


After a while the guard began locking the train doors.

"Good-by," said the Graf, "you'll like Kopfdorf, and my wife is quite right; it's just the place to rest. And everybody who is anybody in Europe learned to talk German at the Bettschneiders. There never was such a place for learning German. People think it will take a year, and they learn easily in three months. Sometimes in two. *Auf Wiedersehen!*"

The trip was pleasant, and the arrival at Kopfdorf quite *normale*, as the Germans say. Nobody met her, or if any one was trying to meet her she did n't know them, so she took a *Droschke* for Herr Dr. Bettschneider's at once.

The ride was delightful, Kopfdorf being the quaintest of old towns, — one of those places where the tram appears a desecration. They drove through the quiet, deserted Domhof and down a little stone-paved twist of a street that ran between high, high walls, and then on among medieval houses with twenty varieties of pitch to the block, and so came at last to Herr Dr. Bettschneider's haven of rest and German.

The number was seven, but they stopped at number fifteen. Leslie called out "Seven" in her most imperative manner, but the cabman turned around and explained to her that no one ever stopped in front of number seven, as Herr Dr. Bettschneider did n't like the noise. So Leslie got out and walked back to number seven. She pulled the bell — a stout iron arrangement which seemed to hang out of a second-story window — and after a liberal while somebody opened a wee latticed shutter and looked out on her with one eye. Her appearance seemed satisfactory, for the door opened, and a pleasant-faced maid let her into a large, cold, pale-green hall. The maid then ran out to get the trunk, and Leslie waited alone in the crisp atmosphere. Presently the maid came back carrying the trunk in both hands, with the cabman strolling pleasantly by her side. Leslie paid the cabman, while the maid carried the trunk on upstairs. Then the cabman went away, and she waited, silently, in the cold hall. Her sensations as she waited grew more and more acute. At first she thought that it was only the cold, but presently she became aware that they were not wholly physical. More subtle and penetrating than any shivers were the sharp little shafts of some hitherto unknown emotion which filled



her with discomfort. Suddenly she knew what it was — for the first time in her life she was filled with awe. She had known love, fear, joy, etc., but it was reserved for the Bettschneider house to teach her the meaning of awe. She trembled as she realized. She could hear her trunk bumping against unknown obstacles above, and the sound distressed her unutterably. She found herself looking anxiously down to see if she had brought any dust in on her shoes. She felt almost sure that she was making trouble, and she trembled more. The Graf had promised her a new experience, and this was indeed a new experience.

Presently, as she stood there, alone, shaking, and not knowing what to do or where to go, there appeared at the top of the very steep, straight stair a little figure in gray — an extremely diminutive lady. She was putting on her gloves in the most careful and precise manner imaginable, and as she tripped gently down the steps she did n't see Leslie at all at first. When she did see her, she gave a start only limited by her size and strength, but quickly rallied and managed a courageous smile.

Leslie was only too pleased to smile back.

The small lady approached close and, "You're Mrs. Revere?" she whispered.

"Yes," Leslie whispered back.

"I thought so. They 're expecting you. Has your trunk come?"

"The maid took it upstairs."

"Oh," said the small lady, and then stood still and hesitated.

"You are English, are you not?" Leslie asked.

"Yes, I am English."

"Do you live here?"

The small lady nodded. "But we must n't talk in the hall," she said, with a sudden air of uneasiness. "Fräulein Kitzlein does n't like it."

"But where can I go?" Leslie asked.

The small lady looked distressed. "I think I must take you to my room," she said. "I don't usually have visitors at this hour, but it won't matter just for once — I don't believe — not if we 're quite quiet."

"But you were just going out," Leslie said.

"That does n't make any difference. I go out for my milk. You see, I 'm not very strong, and I have to drink a glass of milk at four o'clock every day, so I go out to buy it."

Leslie looked down upon her littleness, — she was indeed an extremely small lady, but hospitably inclined.

"Do come up to my room," she urged; "it's so cold here, and I need n't take my milk till half-past four. I'll be very glad to put it off a bit. I do hate milk."

At that she turned around, and Leslie followed her up the steep, straight stair. At the top she turned and showed an anxious little face.

"Don't step off the edge of the carpet," she whispered. "Fräulein Kitzlein would see the mark on the polished floor. I have to tell all my company."

Leslie adhered carefully to the carpet as she turned.

"And don't step on the polished floor on my room, either," said the small lady, stopping at her own door to give the second caution. "It's a little hard, because the rugs are wide, but quite far apart, but if you're careful you can step it."

They went into her room at that, and with care Leslie managed to step it.

"Do sit down," said the small lady, always whispering, "not on the sofa, please, because Fräulein Kitzlein brushed it only this morning and she does n't like to have any one sit on the sofa when it's just been brushed; but you may sit on any one of the chairs. And won't you have just a drop of wine?" She was

standing right in front of Leslie, and her tone was full of eagerest invitation.

"Oh, no, thank you," said Leslie quickly.

"It 's my own," said the small lady; "you need n't mind taking it at all — I buy it myself. And the wine-glasses are mine too. I do wish that the sofa was mine; you might sit on it, then. You might sit on it anyway after to-morrow; it 's only the first two days after it 's brushed that I may n't use it."

Leslie began to perceive how terribly anxious the Gräfin must have been to get rid of her. She sat down on a chair that looked as if others had previously dared do the same thing.

"How long are you going to stay?" asked the small lady, seating herself opposite her. "Fräulein Kitzlein did n't know when she made up my room this morning."

"I was to have stayed for four days," said Leslie, "but I think I 'll go to-morrow. I feel quite — quite uncomfortable — as if I had no right to be here."

"Yes, that 's the way I feel," said the small lady, "and only think, I 've lived here four years, feeling that way! But it was n't so bad before Fräulein Kitzlein came. Oh, believe me," said the small lady,

with her pretty appealing earnestness, "it was not anywhere near so bad before Fräulein Kitzlein came."

"Who is Fräulein Kitzlein?"

"She's the *Stütze*. Oh, do you know what a *Stütze* is? I never dreamed of such a thing before I came here to live! I may n't have my breakfast in bed any more — even the poor old doctor may n't have his in bed. And we may n't ever be out after nine o'clock at night. It's dreadful!"

"But is n't the *Stütze* the cook?"

"No, not at all — not at all. She does the cooking, but she is n't the cook. You may n't fee her; you must keep the money for three months and then buy her a present and leave the price-mark on so she sees that you have really spent the money."

Leslie was lost in amazement.

"I believe I won't take my milk to-day," said the small lady; "I'll order tea for you here with me. You'd like to have tea with me, would n't you?"

"Very much," said Leslie.

"I'll just run down and ask if you may," said the small lady; "Fräulein Kitzlein is rather out of sorts to-day, and I should n't like to offend her by giving

you tea without asking her permission. You don't mind my leaving you a minute?"

She rose as she spoke, to leave the room.

"Stop!" cried Leslie suddenly.

The small lady stopped with a kind of quick quiver.

"Don't ask permission for me to have tea here. I'm not going to stay here. I could n't possibly stay here. Is n't there a hotel in town? There must be a hotel in town."

The small lady looked frightened out of all her small senses.

"Get the girl and have her throw my trunk out into the street," said Leslie, rising with resolution. "I don't care if everything in it smashes to bits. And for goodness' sake, let's get into the street ourselves. I feel choked."

"It's just because you're cold," gasped the small lady, clasping her hands appealingly. "You're cold and — and nervous. And I dare n't put coal on the fire, because they're all asleep. But oh, dear, don't go. Don't be rash."

"I must go," said Leslie; "where is a hotel? I'd die in this house. I can't breathe."

"I know," said the small lady, "I'm that way

too, but it's only Fräulein Kitzlein. You'll be very comfortable, oh, believe me, you'll be very comfortable."

"I don't care what I pay or where I go," said Leslie. "I can't stay here."

"Oh," cried the small lady, now shaking from head to foot with nervous excitement, "I don't see how you can go. What *will* Fräulein Kitzlein say!"

"I don't care what she says," said Leslie; "but tell me the name of the best hotel in Kopfdorf."

"The Gekrönte Engel's said to be best," said the small lady, now close to sobbing. "Oh, dear, I don't know what to do. You could n't go there alone, you know?"

"No, of course not," said Leslie, "but I'm going to take you with me, you poor little bit of a down-trodden mortal."

The small lady gave a gasp, and Leslie caught her hand. She looked such a mixture of fright and joy at the idea, that Leslie wanted to cry and laugh at once.

"Oh, but I'm afraid that Fräulein Kitzlein would n't like it," she almost wailed.

"What difference does it make whether she likes

it or not?" asked Leslie. "Come, we want to be gone before they wake up."

The small lady controlled herself quickly. "Oh, yes," she said, with sudden, marvelous self-control, "if we 're going, we 'd best be gone before they wake up."

CHAPTER XXIV

LESLIE DEVELOPS IN MANY WAYS

THE small lady had almost contracted the habit of gasping instead of breathing, by the time she found herself installed with Leslie at the Gekrönte Engel. Leslie was only a little less astonished. She had never suspected the existence of this side of herself. Such initiative! Such energy! They were actually at the hotel and all nicely settled before the Bettschneider birds awoke to the fact that their nest was empty. Leslie, who had never done any packing in her life, had — under the stress of immediate necessity — risen to untold heights of capability, and really managed to get all that was needed into the small lady's straw basket. (The small lady had not traveled for so many years that she had not the faintest notion what one needed for leaving home over night.)

"It is n't like real traveling, you know," Leslie reminded her, while picking up her soap, tooth-brush, etc., with a hand that was so assured that to the

small lady's inexperience it appeared practiced. "If you want anything, we can easily run up here and get it any minute."

"Oh — h, would you dare come here again?" the small lady asked, stupefied, "after leaving like this?"

"Why, of course," said Leslie; "what have I done to be ashamed of? I shall come and call to-morrow at noon. Quite in the correct German style."

At this the small lady stared more and became more stupefied, but already knew Leslie well enough not to doubt that she was going to do anything she said she was going to do.

Their rooms at the Gekrönte Engel were lovely, with convenient little cupboards opening in the wall-paper here and there. The *Oberkellner* ran back and forth, and rubbed his hands and smiled, and made them very comfortable. Leslie's room projected beyond the small lady's, but the small lady had a chest of drawers to equalize things.

"Well, I never did!" said the small lady. "I'm sure I'm dreaming. Why, I have n't known you an hour yet."

"It's been the liveliest hour you've known for a long time!" laughed Leslie.

"It's been the liveliest hour of my whole life,"

said the small lady, with every appearance of speaking the truth. They had some hot chocolate instead of tea, and Leslie, seeing a cake-shop opposite, flew down, and out, and over, and bought enough cakes for six, all for twelve and a half cents.

"Is n't this fun?" she laughed, coming in, panting. "It's such fun for me. I'm always so carefully looked out for, you know."

"It's fun for me, surely," said the small lady, quite beaming.

They spread a clean towel on the center-table and arranged their little feast upon it.

"It's like playing doll's-house with you for the doll," Leslie told her companion gleefully. "You are the dearest little thing I ever had to play with, truly."

The small lady beamed some more. "I've always been considered very small," she said. "I'm so glad you like it in me."

"I'm glad that I came to Kopfdorf now," Leslie said. She quite meant it. She felt utterly happy and full of new sensations. The small lady was more interesting than any man that she had ever known — except Hugo. Only to look at her filled one with new conceptions of ways to brighten her gray little life. "I expect there are ever so many people like her in

the world," thought Leslie, "and I've never thought a thing about them. I must hunt them out from now on. I can have a lot of this kind of fun if I just bother to hunt for those who don't have much. I'll whisk all sorts of small ladies off for a frolic, and I'll snatch little beggars out of the gutter and give them a cake every chance I get." Her face grew so bright at the thought that her new friend said, "How happy you look!"

"I am happy," said Leslie; "we're both happy, are n't we?"

"I think I'm in a book," said the small lady.

"It's better than a book," said Leslie, "because it really is real. But I suppose the way we came to meet was a bit book-like. You're a little book-like yourself; you're quite different from anything I've ever seen."

The small lady took no offense at being denominated thus by Leslie's careless Americanism. On the contrary, she echoed the other's words at once. "And you're surely different from anything I've ever seen," she said. "I never knew an American before. I had no idea they were so kind."

"Well, they're not all like me," Leslie felt impelled to admit; "you see, I've lived abroad so much I'm

really quite European. I never forget to say 'How do you do' and '*Adieu*' when I go in and out of stores. Oh, I'm very European."

"Yes," said the small lady agreeably. "I'm sure you're very much nicer than most people."

"Well, I do think I'm nicer than the majority of Americans one meets over here," said Leslie. "Of course it is n't their fault that they act as they do, though, because you see we're brought up so differently."

"Yes?" said the small lady, sweetly interested.

"Yes," said Leslie, knitting her brows, "you see the servants go out all the time with us, and the ladies and gentlemen clean their own shoes, and it makes us all free and equal and easy in our manners."

"It must seem very strange to you over here," suggested the small lady, "having your shoes cleaned for you and all that?"

"Yes, it does," said Leslie, "and it makes us rather light-headed the first one or two trips. You see we're so grateful for the waiting on that we give too big fees, and we're so used to marrying the cook at home that we're too familiar with the servants over here. One does n't dare be haughty with us — anybody may be a millionaire, and they're the only kings we've got."

"Dear me," said the small lady; "don't you have any upper or lower classes?"

"Well, we have people who have lost their money," said Leslie thoughtfully; "they're lower."

"I'd be nobody there, then," said the small lady quietly; "because I lost mine ever so long ago."

Leslie jumped up and ran around the table and kissed her. "I'm going to be tremendously nice to every one who has lost their money after this," she said. "I'm going to take a vow in a church about it."

"Oh, me," said the small lady, "I'm sure Americans are superior to all other people, if they're all like you."

"Oh, but you mustn't think that," said Leslie. "I told you before that I was n't at all American. I'm reserved; I learned that over here. And I'm never impulsive; Americans are apt to be very impulsive. And then I'm very, very conventional; I always keep a maid and a companion, too, just to be proper."

"Where are they now?" asked the small lady, with innocent wonder.

"I lent the maid to Gräfin Morgenlicht," said Leslie, "and I left the companion in London. She's the greatest bore you ever saw in your life; all the men I know just hate her. I'm buying her theatre tickets

and giving her trips that she can't get possibly back from in time for meals, the whole livelong time."

"Yes," said the small lady sympathetically, "that must be hard."

"But you see I have to have her, because it would look so queer if I did n't. And I'm too well-versed in European etiquette to look queer. I think the way American women run around over here is shocking — just shocking — and so I never stir without my maid and companion."

"Yes?" said the small lady, putting in an occasional interrogation point just to show her interest. "I'm sure you're quite right, and I think America must be quite perfect."

"No, I would n't say that," said Leslie, daunted; "it's too expensive to be very nice. Oh, you've no idea how everything costs there. Why, in Berlin I'm going to have a lovely suite — two large rooms and a bath at the Bristol — for eight dollars and a half a day, and in Boston I pay almost that for just a bedroom."

The small lady did n't know how much a dollar was, so she filled her mouth with her last bit of cake and smiled sweetly.

"And now do let's go out," said Leslie. "Let's

go and walk up and down the main street and buy presents for all the Bettschneider family."

The small lady's jaw dropped. "For all the Bettschneider family!" she gasped.

"Oh, yes," said Leslie, "I love buying presents, and we'll fix up just the sweetest hamper imaginable, and send it out there before bedtime. I don't want them to dislike me, just because I could n't possibly stand living with them, you know."

"No — o — o, I suppose not," said the small lady, feebly, "Well, you are kind!"

Leslie began to feel her new character growing upon her. It was more and more delightful. What would Hugo say if he could hear the small lady! Hugo had characterized her as "somebody who had n't an ounce of heart to her credit" during their last stormy interview. If he could see her now!

They put on their things and went out into the brightly lighted Hoch Kopfdorf Strasse and spent a picturesque, pleasant, and profitable hour, wandering up and down the sidewalk, criss-crossing the quiet middle of the street, and buying presents for the Bettschniders.

"I love to do things like this," said Leslie, who had never done anything like this in all her life before, but

was now firmly launched in the new way; "it's such fun!"

"I'm sure it's very kind of you," said the small lady for the twentieth time in two hours. Her face was wreathed in worship of the angel at her side. "I can't imagine how you think of so many ways to be so good," she added.

"It's because I'm such a very happy woman," said Leslie, drifting towards further daring. "I did n't tell you why I was so happy before, but you see I'm going to marry a man that I love very much." The words were out of her mouth before she could stop them. She was quite overcome at her own audacity in making the statement then, and paused to consider.

"Yes?" said the small lady, with the fullest possible faith.

Leslie looked at her. The small lady evidently believed every word that was said to her. The temptation to continue to talk about Hugo was altogether irresistible under the circumstances. "And if he never marries me," Leslie reflected, "I can say he dropped dead in Mauritius, and she'll believe that, too."

"Oh, I'm very, very happy," she said aloud; "you don't know what it is to be going to marry the

man you love. It makes you long to do something to make every one else happy too. I'm so happy!"

She actually was as happy as she proclaimed herself to be in that minute. She had n't the slightest consciousness that she was actuated by the underlying principle of all ideals and realities in thus expressing herself, but she did know that she was happier than she had ever been before in her whole bright life.

"I'm so glad," said the small lady, looking earnestly up at her. "I only hope he's worthy you."

"He's one of the grandest men that ever lived," said Leslie, telling the truth that time.

"I'm so glad for you both," said the small lady, deep sincerity ringing in her little voice. "I hope you'll both be very happy."

"Thank you," said Leslie, accepting the good wish with equal sincerity.

They stopped at Schobenstein and Schneedenenthal's just then to buy a blouse for Fräulein Kitzlein.

"I think that's especially kind in you," said the small lady warmly, "when it was she that really kept you from so much as sitting on the sofa."

"I do try to be nice," said Leslie; "you see the man

I love has such a beautiful disposition that it makes me want to always be sweet-tempered too." She thought as she spoke of a certain incisive growl in which Hugo was wont to interpret the deeper side of his nature to human understanding, but she was now completely carried away by her new position in speech.

"I think a sweet disposition is so pleasant in a man," said the small lady.

"Oh, you should hear the man I love getting a telephone connection!" said Leslie, suddenly lapsing into truth again. Then she went to the *Kasse* to pay for Fräulein Kitzlein's blouse.

"We're going to have a telephone system in Kopfdorf pretty soon," said the small lady when she came back. "If you ever come here after you're married I'll be able to hear him talk over it, maybe."

"I think that we'll come here some time," said Leslie, now thoroughly enjoying the semblance of reality which her dreams assumed by being accepted without question, "but we're going to buy a large place and live in the country. We're both very fond of the country."

"I think you'll like it for a while," said the small lady artlessly.

"If he doesn't like it, we won't live there long,"

said Leslie, recollecting some salient traits of Hugo's and deftly incorporating them into her narrative; "he's that kind of a man."

"I'm sure he's very nice," said the small lady again.

"Oh, he's the dearest man alive," said Leslie, with sudden overwhelming conviction. "When we get our place you must come and visit us."

"I *should* like that," said the small lady.

When they had their arms completely full of parcels they went back to the hotel, and Leslie proceeded to arrange the hamper. "It was too lovely," the small lady kept saying over and over.

"I'm going to send it in your name as well as mine, you know," Leslie told her, as she tied down the catch with a big ribbon bow that would make a nice *Schlips* later. A *Schlips* is a stock in German.

"In my name!" shrieked the small lady; "oh, no."

"Yes, then they'll be nice to you on account of it," said Leslie. "You'll find it much easier to go back to them if they've had these presents from us both together."

"Dear me," said the small lady; "how you do think of everything! Yes, that's true."

The hamper set off to the Bettschneiders at eight

o'clock, and the next day Leslie called on the family. They all liked her very, very much, and looked upon her strange and unprecedented entrance into and exit from their house as pleasant American idiosyncrasies.

"They'll invite you to *Abendbrot*, I think," said the small lady, when she and Leslie were on their way back to the home-like hotel. "I wonder if they'll give you an egg-cup. I never have one."

Leslie just laughed. The Bettschneiders did ask her to *Abendbrot* the next day, but she and the small lady were going to the *Hauptstadt* to shop and so had to refuse the invitation.

Leslie spent six blissful days in Kopfdorf. They were wonderful days — days that did for her nature and life what the first warm spring rain and the first hot spring sun do for the forest buds. Her soul, hitherto a veritable Sleeping Princess of a soul, burst into bloom, and it was the small lady's smile, and the small lady's little voice, gentle tenderness, and plaintive wet eyes, that wrought the miracle. They revealed possibilities so big, and hitherto left by her so unfilled, that a weaker woman might have drawn back blinded. But Leslie was very brave. She never had known fear, and she did not fear now. She just

opened eyes and arms to all this new Future, for the first time revealed to her heart and soul.

The day to leave swept down upon them all too quickly. A letter from the Gräfin announcing her survival of the wedding and her imminent departure for Berlin, fixed the date for Leslie to go too. When her trunk was packed for the Gekrönte Engel's omnibus to take to the *Hauptbahnhof*, the *Oberkellner* called a cab and they put into it the small lady's straw basket.

"I can't think whatever makes you so kind," she said to Leslie, with a little quiver in her tone, as they stepped into the cab and drove off. "I think you're the kindest person I ever knew."

"It's just because he's going to make me so very, very happy," said Leslie, her own voice a bit unsteady. Oddly enough, her constant proclamation of Hugo's perfections had altogether altered him in her own estimation. The small lady had not only exalted Leslie in Leslie's eyes, but had led Leslie to exalt Hugo. She saw all sorts of big, fine traits in him now which she had never even thought of before. From trying to depict him as a true hero for the small lady's benefit, she had raised him to one in a new sense for herself. The world had not only widened, as far as heaven lies to

left and right for her, but Hugo had suddenly become universal, and easily filled every one of its grand possibilities to the uttermost limit. Leslie winked hard. She held the small lady's hand tightly, but had no words in which to tell her that it was she — the small lady — who was kind in the great, divine sense of what kindness may truly mean.

When they drove up to the Bettschneiders', the maid was watching for them and came running. Leslie stepped from the cab and so did the small lady.

"I must n't come in," said Leslie. "I'll stay too long and miss my train." She got out her pocket-handkerchief again as she spoke, and the small lady did the same.

They hugged and kissed one another, and there were more tears — not many this time, but very big, warm ones.

Then Leslie got back into the cab, and the small lady went into the house.

It was much like catching a canary that has been fluttering among the pink azalea blossoms in the sunny bow-window, and heartlessly thrusting it back into the cage again! So like! So like!

As the cab rattled and jolted over the stout, dura-

ble stone pavement of Kopfdorf, Leslie had to wipe her eyes again and again, and continually harder. It was part of the new growth in her soul that she was newly tender-hearted, and newly soft to sympathy.

"But I shall have her to visit me," she sobbed, trying to swallow her feelings as fast as they choked her, "and I'll never forget my visit here. If Hugo only knew it, I'm good now! I'm good!"

The cab drew up before the station, and there, right in front of the big middle door, stood Baron Dienstag, smiling all on one side of his face as usual. Leslie gasped. Then she saw Rose standing a little back, and her joy was boundless. She was actually gladder to see Rose than to see the baron.

"Oh, I am good now," she thought, with bubbling satisfaction over her purified standpoint.

"I never found out where you went till to-day," said the resplendent Hussar. "They're very careful of your address at the Schloss. I'd have come the day after you did, if I'd known."

Leslie saw now that the Gräfin von Morgenlicht was the best friend she had in the world.

"My goodness, just think if he had come," she

thought, with a cold chill of fright. "The small lady would n't have been a bit of good at helping me out, and — why — no one can tell what might have happened!" Then she remembered that he had no Schloss, either.

CHAPTER XXV

LESLIE MEETS FRIENDS

BARON DIENSTAG, Leslie, and Leslie's maid all traveled to Berlin together. Usually ladies' maids go second class, but Leslie liked having hers with her, and Rose more than paid her way by always remembering to get the umbrella out of the rack when they left the train.

The conversation was less lively than might have been expected. Leslie could not quite understand its dullness herself, but there seemed to have been some subtle change wrought in her point of view by the sweet, silent pathos of the last few days. We never can know just when or where the best in our make-up may burst into bloom, and in some mysterious manner quaint old Kopfdorf and the small lady had managed to change the sun, moon, and stars for Leslie. Hugo loomed mightier and more wonderful, and life loomed very much as Hugo did, but the same glory that caused so much to shine resplendent, seemed to somehow dim

the silver-braided glory of the little Dienstag. Leslie, who had found him so amusing at Morgenlicht, found him quite otherwise pulling out of Kopfdorf, heavy at Magdeburg, insufferable at Brandenburg, and absolutely out of the question at the Potsdamer Bahnhof. And yet she really could n't just see why.

"I do wonder if I'm getting tired of men," she thought in startled wonder at so dire a possibility. "Oh, dear! If I am!"

They arrived in Berlin about six o'clock and drove straight to the Hotel Bristol. The lovely, snuff-brown carriage-man came hurrying forth, and the lady, the Hussar, and the lady's maid were let out and let in. Rooms were awaiting them. Heaven knows where the baron lodged himself, but Leslie was taken straightway to the most charming suite imaginable, with two doors set in every casing. A pretty sitting-room with one telephone on a table and another that looked like an ear-muff clinging to the wall, a double-bedded bedroom, and a wonderful bath-room, containing a bath that had tile steps leading down to it by easy gradations. One of the doors in her sitting-room opened into the Gräfin's sitting-room, and the Gräfin came running in to kiss her on both cheeks at once.

"Oh, my dear, I am glad to see you. Well, they are married! And you can believe that we are relieved."

"I'm so glad!" said Leslie. "Did it go off well?"

"No, it did n't go off well at all," called the Graf from the other room. (His wife had left both of the doors in that casing open.) "It snowed!"

"Oh, dear," said Leslie.

"Yes, it snowed," said the Gräfin, "oh, and how it snowed! And one of the old princes caught cold."

"And the other old prince caught a worse one," called out the Graf, "so he never said a word all the time."

"But, dear *Mann*," called back the Gräfin, "that was because his physician forbade him to speak."

"And that reigning prince brought a valet that was a Moor," said the Graf, now coming in and joining them, "and nobody told us. When he was going up to the Friedrich des Grossen Saal with his master's bag he met the old duchess' *Kammerjungfer* coming down with the cognac and —"

"And she fell," said his wife, "and she spilt the cognac all over the Sans Souci Treppe — that little stone stair, you know. We call it the Sans Souci Treppe because one has to be so careful not to fall."

"It's a little joke, you see," said the Graf; "it's a

joke about the stairs, and then they go to Friedrich des Grossen Saal; so that's another joke."

"Yes, and then he met my *Kammerjungfer* with two jugs of hot water," continued the Gräfin, "and she fell and spilt the water, and then he met me in the corridor in my dinner-dress, and I fell."

"But you did n't spill anything," said the Graf.

"*Lieber Mann*," said his wife, "it was that I was not carrying anything. That was all the difference."

"No one told us he was a Moor," said the Graf, again.

"Did you ever see a Moor?" the Gräfin asked Leslie.

"I know what they look like," said Leslie.

"Yes, but not this one," said the Gräfin. "I was sure it was the devil. So black!"

"He came from Africa," said the Graf; "the prince said he made an excellent valet."

"Yes, but he was so cold," said the Gräfin; "he was shaking and shivering all the time. And, oh, but how it snowed!"

"It was good weather for the *Jagd*," said the Graf.

"And I could n't borrow a carpet for the church," said the Gräfin, "and Witzleben would n't stay with

Dienstag. Only think. I had to have him in my dressing-room. And Hohenthal brought his nephew."

"His nephew is narrowly related to us," said the Gräfin in an explanatory tone.

"His mother was a Von Querseife," explained the Gräfin kindly.

"And her mother was a Gegenüber," said the Graf.

"And that chimney did smoke," said the Gräfin, "and, oh, the bed linen. I had all the bed linen in the country side."

"They 're washing it while we 're here," said the Graf.

"We shan't go home till they write that everything is in order," said the Gräfin. "Liebesthal is here while they get his house to rights, too. He kept twenty-three people."

"And so he would n't lend us anything," said the Graf; "he said he needed all his things for his own house."

"I told you that he was that kind of a man," said the Gräfin. "Think of such a neighbor!"

After a while they went back to their own quarters and shut the two doors between. Then Leslie began to dress for dinner. They had a jolly little party down

in the café with the Hussar and the Monocle for guests. The conversation was again mainly about the wedding, with occasional side excursions regarding the maternal relatives of the guests. After dinner they went to the *Tiergarten* in a motor and looked at the monument and at the soldier in front of it. Leslie thought the *Siegesallee* very beautiful and striking, but her German friends explained to her that it was neither, so she at once promised to change her mind. Then they went to the theatre for a little and then to a café for a little, and then home.

It was nearly midnight when Leslie got to her rooms, and she could n't understand her being so fearfully tired out. It seemed to her that the wonderful Graf was almost as uninteresting as the simple-minded Hussar. She was much surprised to find herself longing for the small lady. "Goodness me," she thought, all the time that Rose was unhooking her, "I am changed. What is going to happen to me!" Rose took off her corsage, and she stepped carefully out of her skirt alone. "It can't be I'm getting old," she thought, "and yet I must be getting something if a Hussar bores me, and a schloss does n't allure me any more."

After she was in between the silky coolness of the

linen sheets she thought of Hugo. It might have been feared that she would worry over the possibility of his boring her, too, but she never thought of that at all. Instead Hugo's halo widened and brightened out of all proportion to the feelings which his long absence should have brought forth. She found herself strangely regretful and self-reproachful in view of her memories. "I expect I am a little fool, just as he says," she confessed humbly. It was a great step ahead for Leslie to be humble — let alone her vast advance into the realm of accurate investigation when she recognized herself as a little fool. She considered the whole for some time, then sighed, thought some more about Hugo, much about the small lady, then much more about Hugo. And then she slept.

CHAPTER XXVI

AU REVOIR

THE next morning Leslie awoke about nine o'clock. She certainly had slept well, long, and liberally, and she was not so different from the ordinary run of womenkind but that it did her a lot of good. Hooking her fingers together behind her neck, she sighed happily and felt life to be very much fuller of big and beautiful possibilities than she had ever dreamed before. She felt widely content, — content with herself because she was going to be so different, and with all the world because she was going to make it so different. It was a beautiful spirit in which to awake, and she looked up at the sky-blue ceiling and saw through tears that its blue was at once the color of heaven and of the small lady's tender eyes. She felt her heart swell to choking. I suppose that the wood-flowers feel just so the hour before they open to their first day, full of upward-bent longings, conscious of new, hitherto unknown desires and aspirations.

"Really, I feel as if, instead of always aching to do what I must n't, I was going to learn to like to do all that I can," thought this new Leslie, very flower-like herself, had any one been by to see her in that moment. Her twisted grammar did not clarify her little up-springing aspirations any too clearly, but her eyes were very sweet and earnest, indeed.

"Oh, I am going to be worthier to be alive," she added, and her purified consciousness led her to feel that she had indeed allowed many opportunities to "pass her by." (Although not in the way that Maurice had meant.)

Rose brought her her mail presently, and got the bath ready while she looked it over. The Graf and Gräfin were long up, Rose reported, and the Gräfin's *Kammerjungfer* had announced that they had gone to look at a threshing-machine. Graf Liebesthal had sent some violets, and Baron Dienstag had sent some lilies-of-the-valley; some plain, unadorned Englishmen and Americans had left cards and notes, too. Leslie looked everything over before she felt that it was her duty to rise and make use of the tiled descent into her tub. It struck her as very curious, but not so much more curious than the English giant dishpan; and it was n't really so bad after one was actu-

ally down and in, since then one could rest one's head on the second lowest step and float. "I do like German ways," Leslie thought, floating.

Afterwards she dressed in a nice, demure, blue walking-suit and went into the sitting-room for her chocolate. It was beautifully served by a young waiter, whose eyes were as wicked as Maurice's own. Leslie drank appreciatively.

Presently there came a rap at the door. She cried, "*Herein*," thinking that the happily disposed young waiter had something else to feed her.

In answer Hugo walked into the room. He looked very big, and quite composed, as usual.

Leslie started violently. "Oh, dear," she exclaimed, "Oh, my!"

Hugo came to her side and shook hands.

"Oh, my," she said again, then "oh, dear! Oh, why did n't you send up, or telephone — or —"

"Go on and finish your breakfast," he said, sitting down and smiling pleasantly. "I found out that you were all right before I knocked."

"Oh, dear! How do you find out things?" she said helplessly, looking feebly first at her plate and then at him.

"Go on with your breakfast," said Hugo. He had

ceased to answer questions years ago. He thought it a foolish failing.

"Yes," said Leslie; "yes — yes, I will. My! dear me! I never thought of its being you."

She took her butter-pat up with her fork as she spoke and put it into her mouth. She seemed disconcerted.

But Hugo was perfectly composed, at all events. He took out his pocket-book and looked earnestly in it for a cigarette. "May I smoke?" he asked; "I've been out walking for an hour." He was very cool. "I've been waiting to get somewhere where I could smoke," he added.

"Dear me," said Leslie, pouring chocolate into her glass of water, "is it as late as that?" She did n't in the least know what she was doing or saying.

"I came last night," Hugo said, putting up his pocket-book in a perfectly collected but somewhat absent-minded manner. "Who was that man you were sitting with?"

"Oh," said Leslie, turning white and sick, "were you here then? He's German; he's a Graf — that's why he kissed my hand. They all do it — he did n't mean anything." She became quite pitiful to see.

Hugo looked around the room. "Who sent you the violets?" he asked.

"Oh — h — h," said Leslie, in still more acute woe, "he did. But they don't mean anything either. No one means anything." She stopped desperately, and now poured a little water into her chocolate cup.

"Who was the Hussar?" asked Hugo, taking out his card-case and looking in that for cigarettes next.

"He's a baron," said Leslie wretchedly. "You know every son of a baron is a baron here; it does n't mean anything."

Hugo put up his card-case and surveyed the room again.

"Who was that man you were taking tea with at the Carlton Saturday week?" he asked.

"Oh, my goodness me," said Leslie, clasping her hands in misery under the table, "I can't remember. Truly I can't. My head's just going round and round. Who did tell you?"

"And all that Kenelm business," said Hugo; "it's a pretty state of affairs when you get mixed up with detectives!"

"But I did n't have anything to do with it" (she was almost weeping); "nobody can help being looked up if anybody wants to have them looked up."

Hugo looked thoughtfully at his large, handsome hands. "How long do you think I'm going to stand this kind of nonsense?" he asked; "who was that fellow that went out to Hammersmith on the 'bus with you?"

Leslie gasped, and then the tears started. "Rita Coghlan was with us," she protested. "I never do anything that I should n't, and I'm always looking as if I did. Rita was with us. And he never meant anything. I never let any man mean anything."

"Don't you ever really mean to marry any of them?" Hugo asked, looking directly at her.

"N — no — no, indeed," she protested. "Oh, my gracious me, you know I don't."

Hugo raised his eyebrows and surveyed the room some more. An endless period of time then passed slowly along into eternity. Leslie tried to be quiet, to sit still, to breathe correctly. But all of a sudden a great gasp burst from her lips. She raised her eyes to Hugo's. He was curiously scarlet. They looked very steadily at one another. There was another rather long silence. Then he held out his hand, and she got up slowly and came around the table, and laid hers in it.

"I'm going to cry," she whispered; "I know it."

"Go on and cry, then," said Hugo, and pulled her down on his knee. She buried her face in his shoulder and cried quite a few tears.

"Feel better now?" he asked after a while.

"Y — y — yes," she said, her face still hidden.

"That's good," said the man. "Well, what do you say? Shall we go ahead and take the chance? I'm willing if you are."

"Oh — h — h," said Leslie, rather melting into his collar; "oh, I can't believe it."

"Why, you've always known I'd marry you some time," said Hugo; "you must have known that."

"N — no," said Leslie. "I never felt sure."

"Well, you can count on it from now on, because I'm going to."

Another long period, this time of great, although largely unintelligible happiness ensued. Leslie was ecstatically beatific. After a while they went out and walked in the cheerless *Tiergarten*, and she thought the statues even more lovely than the night before. Hugo wanted to go to lunch "anywhere," but Leslie thought that they ought to go back to the Gräfin, who would be done with the threshing-machine by this time.

"I don't see why," said the man. But they went back.

The Gräfin was home and was told. She proved far from enthusiastic. "I wanted you to marry Liebesthal," she said to Leslie most frankly. "He's our oldest friend and nearest neighbor, and then I'd have had you so near. You must have seen how anxious we were to bring it about."

Leslie was amazed. "But what things you said about him!" she said, opening her eyes widely. "Think how you warned me against him!"

The Gräfin patted her hand and smiled faintly. "That was just because you were an American, my dear," she said in a sad but kindly tone. "You see I've read so many of your romances. I thought that you went by contraries always, so we tried to make him attractive to you."

"And Baron Dienstag?" Leslie asked, with a tiny smile, "what of him?"

"Oh, he is engaged," said the Gräfin, "it's a secret, though. Her mother was a Von Wasserwein. It's such a nice match because his mother was a Von Weinwasser, — the two old rival branches, you see?"

"Y — yes, I see," said Leslie, "and now may I bring Mr. Guilford and present him?"

"If we only could give you your wedding," the Gräfin exclaimed suddenly; "how charming that would be. Could n't you manage that?"

Leslie was deeply touched. "But he has n't been in Germany long enough, nor I have n't, either."

"*Ach*, so," said the Gräfin. "No, then of course you can't."

Hugo came in and was presented. He kissed the noble lady's hand so nicely that she changed her opinion regarding her choice for Leslie at once.

"After you're married you must come and stay with us," she said; "you can hunt with my husband."

"That will be sport," said Hugo courteously. "We'll leave for London to-night and be with you by Thursday week."

"Oh, — oh, my — oh, my goodness me!" cried Leslie. "I can't —"

Hugo looked at her.

And the look recalled to her her new self — her unselfish new self, her resolution to live for others, to fill the future with happiness, to sacrifice herself, to be brave and courageous, and to love greatly. And her spirit rose mightily and conquered. And they left for London that night.

You can get married very quickly in London, — in about a week, I believe. Indeed, I am assured that a residence can be established by sending your luggage ahead and you need arrive only in time for the ceremony.

THE END





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